CHAPTER IV

HUMAN MONSTERS

I THINK that it is a fairly well known fact that we have had in France more abnormal murders than any other country. France has been called the home of the "human monster"—that type of murderer who delights in his killing and who exercises the greatest ingenuity and brutality in the execution. The French murderer is distinguished by this peculiar characteristic of mutilation, and cases like that of Landru are not at all uncommon in the annals of French crime.

The old *Dumolard case* aroused, in its day, intense popular interest. I have selected it as representative of those crimes which are committed by cynical brutes who kill for booty of next to nothing in value and always in the same manner, selecting poor victims who are easy game.

Carrara and *Eyraud* arranged beforehand the deed which was intended, in one stroke, to enrich them—or at least to enable them to live for a long time on the profits of their ignominy.

Finally, *Landru*, that diabolical creature, a study of whose character allows us to measure the uttermost limits to which a man of intelligence, cunning, and strong will may go to gain a livelihood.

Up to the present the official Police story of the Landru case has never been told. You have it here in the terse, perhaps crude, phraseology of the Police records. I believe it will be found that many of the facts I am able to reveal throw an aspect on the case entirely different from those afforded by the many unofficial accounts that have been given to the world.

DUMOLARD

Perhaps one of the most striking human monsters we have had in France was Dumolard, the fiendish and inhuman murderer who killed and mutilated servant girls for their few paltry possessions and clothing. There is no exactly parallel case in the archives of the Prefecture, and therefore I give the facts in a few words as a representative case of murder for gain. I tell this story without embroidery, and almost as it is set out in the official records, because, while an affair of great psychological interest, it is not a case about which one feels that one wants to become too fully descriptive.

. . . . . .

On the 26th May 1861, just before two o'clock in the afternoon, a man of about fifty, with bent back, and a simple face fringed

with a black beard, clad in a blue blouse, and wearing a black hat with flapping rims, called a "Flambard," accosted on the bridge of Guillotière, at Lyon, a young girl with the appearance of a servant, and told her he wanted to engage a maid.

Marie Pichon, such was the girl's name who was questioned, was in fact a domestic servant, and was looking for a place.

They reached an agreement after some bargaining, and the new employer, having had her trunk handed over to a porter, told him to take it to Les Brotteaux Station; and there they took the train for Montluel.

On the way, the man explained to his companion that they would have more than an hour's walk to reach his house. On arrival, nevertheless, he carried his servant's box on his back.

Night came on. Gradually the countryside became obscured. Leaving the main road the man entered a ravine. After walking for some minutes, he put the trunk on the ground abruptly. He said he felt he could carry it no further. It did not matter, though, he would hide it in a ditch, and come for it in the morning with his cart. Marie Pichon began to find his manner strange: the house seemed very far off, and the whole business disquieting. She asked whether they would soon arrive.

For reply, the man, drawing a strong cord from under his blouse, threw it like a lasso about her neck.

The fear that had been stealing over her had put Marie on her guard.

She caught the rope in the air before it settled, and whilst the man was hesitating took flight down the path they had followed. She ran so well, despite the roughness of the ravine, that the would-be assassin, after having chased her for some hundreds of yards, gave up trying to catch her.

Some minutes later she arrived at the village of Balan, fell exhausted at the threshold of a house and told in a panting voice what had happened. As soon as they were notified the gendarmerie took up the inquiry.

The next morning they were led by Marie Pichon to the spot where the man had put down the trunk. It had disappeared.

The inquiry did not succeed in identifying the mysterious malefactor, but it brought to light other previous facts with which the Police established a connection.

On the 28th February 1855, the body of a murdered woman had been found in a clearing of the forest of Tramoyes.

The same year, four other attempts at robbery with violence had been committed in the same district on servants engaged at a chance meeting, as Marie Pichon herself had been.

A still more remarkable fact was that all these attempts had been made in the neighbourhood of the villages of Montluel and Dagneux.

Earlier inquiries had led to nothing. They had fallen into oblivion since the attempts had not been renewed in the following years. But in 1859 and 1860 other and similar cases, always attempts on maidservants and always in the same district, had occasioned new complaints. The mysterious criminal, however, still remained unknown.

The inquiry into the " Affaire Pichon " led to no clearer result than the others, until, some days later, a peasant who was talking the matter over in a cabaret at Montluel—of which the licensee was one Joly—remarked that the author of all these attempts must be living in the neighbourhood, and that one ought to be able to find him because his description was known: bowed shoulders, dragging legs, thick lip. The proprietor of the cabaret, who had not heard this before, cried out: " But there is only one man in all the district who answers to that description. That is Raymond. He hardly ever leaves his hut except at night; never works; and lives no one knows how. It is he, for sure."

The same day he laid his statement before the nearest Justice of the Peace, who decided to have the man's hut searched.

Raymond—his real name was Dumolard—lived with his wife, whom he beat and terrorized, in a small house in a lonely spot The search made by the Justice and the gendarmes led to the discovery, in his retreat, of fifteen hundred objects, mostly women's clothes, of every description and with all marks removed.

Arrested without delay, Dumolard denied all guilt with calm assurance; he claimed to have bought a part of the things found in his house, and said that the rest had been given him, at one time and another, for services rendered.

Pressed with questions, the wife, however, acknowledged having helped her husband, on the night of the 26th or 27th May, to carry a trunk from the ravine at Montluel to the wood at Rouillones, which was about two kilometres from their house. She acknowledged also that she had helped to burn the contents.

A search in the little wood proved the truth of this statement, but Dumolard continued to deny everything imperturbably.

The woman was then questioned about a watch found in the search. After some hesitation she said Dumolard had brought this object home one night about four years before, and he had said on coming in: " I have just killed a girl in the wood of Mont-Main, and I am off to bury her."

Researches made in the wood brought the body to light almost at once. Dumolard continued his denials.

The wife was then questioned about a green pocket-book, containing papers in the name of Eulalie Boussod, also found during the search.

She answered with the same lack of emotion as before: "One night, in the month of February last, Dumolard came in, and said to me: 'I have just killed a girl in the Bois des Communes. I must go and bury her.' Since then this pocket-book has been in the house."

Dumolard was then taken to the place of this last crime. He said he did not know what it was they were troubling about.

The search lasted several hours, and threatened to go on much longer, when Dumolard, changing his tactics, said suddenly: "Don't hunt any more. I know where the body is, and I will tell you. It was not I who did it. I only helped to bury it.

"As for the other girl you found, the affair was carried out by two people who habitually attacked such girls. I only helped to bury the bodies.

"For my share, they gave me the things you found at my place, which had been taken from these girls."

From that moment the system of defence adopted by Dumolard never varied. All the crimes had been committed by mysterious bearded men: and he had only been an accessory after the fact.

The arrest of the monster, and the discovery of his victims, aroused violent public feeling. The proceedings in his case at the Assize Courts opened on the 20th January 1862, before a very excited audience.

When he was brought into the hall, voices cried out: "There he is! There he is!" Waving his hat, he replied calmly: "Yes. Here he is!" and sat down without showing the slightest emotion. He was accused of robberies, violations, and murder.

He was a strong and brutal peasant, with a large nose, thick lips, hollow eyes, and bushy eyebrows. A beard fringed his hard features.

His wife, thin and slight, with shifty eyes and a cunning face, was placed at his side.

He persisted in his system of defence: the bearded men had done everything. Condemned to death, he was executed on the 8th March following, whilst his wife was removed to a convict prison to begin the twenty years' penal servitude to which she had been sentenced.

I have related this affair as an instance of that type of crime which is dominated by the desire for gain.

On the other hand, I have chosen the Carrara Case as an example of a single crime, decided on and carried out in the same brutal and cynical manner, under the pressure of an immediate urgency.

CARRARA

On the 30th November 1897, a message from the Commissariat of the Faubourg Montmartre informed the Prefecture of Police of the disappearance of a bank messenger named Lamarre, who after having received a sum of 63,000 francs, had not turned up again at the bank, nor at his house.

The inquiry, opened at once, soon established that there was no embezzlement. Lamarre, 63 years of age, was a retired servant of the Western Railway Company, where he had worked for thirty-five years, an excellent example of the serious and honest type of employé. He had no entanglements or vices, and only kept on at his work because he had, in his old age, adopted two orphans who had no one else to help them.

There was no shadow of doubt that a crime had been committed. Lamarre had certainly been murdered during his round.

The Detective Department began feverishly to try to solve the problem. They traced Lamarre to every place where he had to draw money. After he had finished at Gentilly, he went towards Kremlin-Bicêtre, where he had four people to see, named respectively Marin, Bonnefois, Carrara, and Cantarelle.

The three first-named showed the inquirers receipts for the amounts paid. The last denied having seen him.

All likely places for the disposal of a corpse were searched without result; and a vain search was made in a house of sordid aspect that Lamarre never liked to enter when called upon to collect money there.

On the 6th December the inquiry made a great forward stride. It was established that the man Carrara, at whose house the bank messenger was last seen, was under suspicion, and was very embarrassed financially. It was discovered, from the statement of a neighbour, that the woman Carrara had wanted to borrow 300 francs on the eve of the crime, and had failed to do so. Yet a debt of 75 francs had been paid.

The said Carrara ran mushroom cellars that extended to the Fort de Bicêtre, and lived in a place very useful for a disappearance, a hut situated in a piece of ground, walled all around, and covered with manure. He had posed as the victim of many fires, but was suspect.

His wife replied to all inquiries : " I paid the account (in fact she showed the receipt) when the collector came at two o'clock. He waited in the dining-room on the ground floor, while I went up to the first storey to get some money. When he left, after being paid, I looked out of the window. I saw a navvy in the road talking to someone unknown to me, but I saw no more of the collector. He must have turned to the right, down the Rue Etienne Dollet."

This woman, big and round-faced, with sharp eyes and a cunning look, gave all these explanations in a calm voice and with a very detached air. She seemed to be quite sure of her facts.

Her statements were, however, at once contested by the navvy, who had known the man who had disappeared very well, and who had not seen him either enter or come out.

Questioned in his turn, Carrara confirmed the explanations of his wife. He was not at all upset, and told the Police they could look anywhere they pleased, but they would not find the collector there, as his wife had already stated.

A search was made in the mushroom cellars, but gave no result : yet in spite of all the Police became more and more convinced of Carrara's guilt, and it was practically impossible to discover a body hidden in those immense galleries if the murderer had taken enough precaution.

It was then that someone had the idea of questioning the young Xavier Carrara, son of the suspected man, who was only five years old.

Examined at the Sûreté the questions and answers are of singular interest, for the child at once placed the guilt on his parents. Here are the questions and the incriminating replies of Xavier Carrara.

Q. " Did you see a sick man either in the dining-room, or in the yard ? "
A. " Yes. He was dead."
Q. " Where is the body now ? "
A. " In prison."
Q. " Why is he in prison ? "
A. " Because he wanted to steal something from Papa."
Q. " From where did they take him to prison ? "
A. " By the road."
Q. " Who took him ? "
A. " Papa and Mama."
Q. " How did they take him to prison ? "
A. " In a cart."

Q. " What kind of cart ? "
A. (pointing at a manure-cart). " One like that."
Q. " Where did you see the dead man ? "

The child pointed with a finger at a spot in the middle of the barn, about a yard from the manure cart.

Confounded, the woman Carrara began at once to make avowals.

She stated that the affairs of the household had been very worrying. Carrara had thought out how to kill the bank messenger, and then dispose of his body. With this object in view, he had taken down into the mushroom cellars the day before several baskets full of coke, and prepared the big furnace below the ventilation pits, which were designed to blow away the harmful gases fomented in these underground places.

When Lamarre came in, Carrara asked him to wait while his wife was bringing the money from the first floor, and invited him to sit down. As he turned to select a chair, Carrara dealt him a single blow from behind, hitting him on the nape of the neck with a huge carriage key which, with this end in view, he had placed behind the door of the dining-room.

The man fell dead.

After cutting the straps of the wallet, Carrara, helped by his wife, had, according to the child, dragged the body to the barn and hoisted it into a manure-cart. This they pulled to a ventilation shaft, through which they lowered the corpse, by means of a rope, into the furnace already prepared, and to which they set light at once.

The cremation took eight hours: after it there remained nothing of the unfortunate Lamarre but a few ashes, which were buried in different parts of the mushroom beds, and the metal parts of his purse and wallet.

The money was found hidden behind a stone in the wall.

Arrested on the 9th December, Carrara denied everything. By the next day, faced with his wife's avowals—he reproached her furiously with having sold him—he confessed.

Following his indications, a sum of 21,610 francs was recovered. It had been placed in a tin box, and hidden in the wall behind a brick marked with the number 15, at the bottom of the pit. A small ingot of gold was found at the same time, which was a product of the victim's watch. But no trace of the body.

It was not until two months later that a carter, who had come to carry away the rubbish in the yard, noticed some whitish matter that seemed like burnt bones. When submitted to experts it was stated to be of human origin.

The proceedings at the Assize Courts were of little interest: the case was a clear one.

In the dock stood the two prisoners. Carrara, a big dried man, bony, thin, with prominent cheek bones, whose features showed in no marked manner any criminal traces, but revealed a low and cynical nature. His wife, a plump woman, with keen eyes rather deep-sunk in her brow, which was high. Her face gave an impression of intelligence and decision, and seemed to denote that she had played, psychologically, a more active rôle in the crime than was then apparent.

Carrara, who at the beginning of the inquiry had defended himself skilfully, now realized in view of the statements of his child and the confession of his wife, that his case was hopeless, and lapsed into a stubborn silence which he maintained to the end.

He was condemned to death, and executed on the 25th June 1898. His wife had a life sentence.

With Eyraud and Landru, we arrive at crimes committed with more intelligence in their conception and execution than has been recorded so far. They were only laid by the heels through long and patient research by the Police. The authors of these crimes, long time premeditated and worked out in detail, certainly staked all on the hazard of the dice. In fact, as will be seen in the recitals of these two cases, both criminals nearly escaped scot-free.

EYRAUD

The case I shall next detail concerns what was not only a very extraordinary crime—since the murderer adopted the unusual practice of hanging his victim—but also constitutes a particularly brilliant piece of criminal investigation on the part of the Sûreté Inspectors who took charge of the affair and brought the criminals to book.

On the 27th July 1889, the brother-in-law of M. Gouffe, Court Usher, who lived at 148 Rue de Montmartre, notified the Detective Headquarters of the disappearance of his relative, who had not turned up—either at his home or at his office—since the previous day.

No theft had been committed at the office. A sum of 14,000 francs received during the day was intact in the cardboard box in which it had been placed.

A widower, in easy circumstances, in good health, Gouffe was an usher who was essentially Parisian. He frequented the

theatrical world and also the world of fashion and passed as a man of fortune.

He had been seen for the last time, at the hour when the world takes an *apéritif*, at the Café Véron. The puzzle was much harder to solve as Gouffe's relations with women were numerous: but such was the starting-point for the Police.

M. Goron, Head of the Detective Department at that time, to whom is due the ultimate merit of unearthing the assassins, attached great importance to a statement of the concierge at the office to the effect that a well-dressed man, wearing a top-hat, whom she had taken for Gouffe, had rung at 9.20 p.m., on the 26th July, ascended to the office, and entered it with the Usher's private key.

This individual came down again in five minutes, and the concierge came out of her lodge to give his letters to the man she thought to be Gouffe. It was not he, but a man of the same size, with a brown moustache.

This man had left the front door open.

Challenged by her as to why he had been to the office, he replied quietly: "I am an employé of Monsieur Gouffe": and then, gaining the exit, disappeared.

The concierge went up at once to the office, and found nothing abnormal.

Inspector Goron, being summoned there, noted candle grease on the floor, left by the nocturnal visitor, and muddy footmarks near the door.

This was all the evidence the Police had. Suspicion was directed at first towards one Remi Launay, a great friend of Gouffe, whose past had not been without trouble, and who declared that Gouffe, through one of his numerous intrigues with women, had been the victim of a plot. But, when taxed, he countered everything with denials, and there was in truth nothing but moral presumption against him.

The inquiry was making no headway, when on the 13th August a body in a sack was found at Millery (Rhône). This naked corpse, in a state of complete putrefaction, was doubled up and bound with string in the position of a stooping man, the head enveloped in black wax cloth. The sack was in an inextricable tangle of brambles, at the bottom of a hole from 20 to 25 feet deep. Its presence there had been revealed by the stench arising from the corpse. Otherwise it might have remained indefinitely in this shrewdly selected spot.

On the 15th August, a peasant who was looking for edible snails, found under a bush by the roadside, about ten kilometres

from the spot where the corpse in the sack had been found, a large trunk rotted utterly to pieces, which he collected and took to the gendarmerie at Saint-Genis.

The police sergeant noted two labels that showed the trunk had been recently taken by train from Paris to Lyon.

The first label was marked :

" Gare de départ : Paris.1231."

And the second :

" Paris, 27 Juillet-188. T.R.3. Destination : Lyon-Perrache."

The Coroner, being forewarned, completed the date of which the last figure was effaced. It should have read 1889, the date of the current year.

The head of the Detective Department at Paris concluded at once that the body discovered at Millery was that of Gouffe, and suggested by wire that the Coroner should proceed with identification with that idea in mind.

On the 18th August he received the following message :

" No identification of the corpse with Gouffe."

However, he was not convinced, and sent Inspector Loudais to Lyon, accompanied by a relative of Gouffe.

The corpse had been taken to the Faculté de Médecine.

The head, eaten by worms, allowed of no identification. As for the hair, the doctor who performed the post-mortem had come to the conclusion that that of the corpse was black and long, whilst that of Gouffe was short and light chestnut in colour.

On his return to Paris, Inspector Loudais made his report to his chief, who remained incredulous, growled, and persisted that the Coroner's inquest at Lyon was in error.

The dailies having published a photo of the blood-stained trunk, a coachman of the name of Lafarge came forward on the 22nd August, to state to the Examining Magistrate that he thought he could recognize it, and that he had carried it on his carriage about the date of the crime.

But soon his contradictory statements brought him under suspicion. On the 2nd September he was arrested ; and then he denounced, as authors of the crime, three men—Chatain, Bouvanin, and Revol. A little later, he retracted his statement, and declared he had never carried the trunk.

Such indications were evidently not of a nature to make the task of the Police any easier—only to lead them astray.

More and more convinced, however, despite the verdict of the

Coroner's inquest, that the body discovered at Millery was indeed that of M. Gouffe, M. Goron continued to be preoccupied with the trunk marked by the P.L.M. Railway.

He verified the hours of departure and arrival, succeeded in establishing that the luggage had been claimed on arrival, and proved that the trunk had been used to transport the corpse, especially as the key had been found in the same place as the body.

He began again to study the question of the hairs, obtained from a hair-brush some hairs belonging to Gouffe, and compared them with those of the corpse.

Then came another dramatic coup. This time the hairs were similar. If those of the corpse had seemed to be black and curled at the first post-mortem, it was because of the coagulated blood on them.

A new post-mortem was ordered. It established absolutely that the body found at Millery was that of the Usher, Gouffe.

So finished the first part of the " affaire."

Gouffe was identified, but his assassins were unknown.

Inspector Goron went feverishly to work over the trunk exposed at the Morgue, and before which some thousands of people filed every day ; he again had published a coloured photograph of it ; at the same time Gouffe's family advertised a reward of 10,000 francs to anyone who could throw any useful light on the affair.

M. Goron succeeded first in establishing that the trunk was of English make. Then on the 27th December 1889, he received a letter coming from one Chéron, a hotel-keeper in London, informing him that the trunk exposed at the Morgue, and of which he had only seen the photograph, probably belonged to two individuals named Michel Eyraud and Gabrielle Bompard, who had stayed with him at the beginning of July, and had then returned to Paris.

They had bought, on the eve of their departure, at the shop of a man named Zwantig, this trunk, the more remarkable for its size as they had very little baggage to take.

The Chief Detective at once had a search made for the lodgings occupied, at the time of the crime, by the girl Bompard, now disappeared, and found them at 13 Rue Jouffroy. The landlord confirmed the news from England. The girl had certainly had a trunk like that at the Morgue.

The inquiry followed up by Scotland Yard in London established, besides, that the trunk had been sold to two persons of whom the description was given. It had been in the shop for

two years, and the merchant had never had more than two of this pattern.

The vendor, M. L., furnished very exact details of the two clients, particularly of Eyraud, who had called himself Michel.

It was learned that Eyraud had arrived alone in London, and was later joined by Gabrielle Bompard, whom he passed off as his daughter or niece, and whom he maltreated.

Taken over to London in the first days of January by Paris detectives, the cut-up trunk was at once recognized by the proprietor of the shop, as well as by the salesman. The assassins of Gouffe were now known: it remained only to find them.

The Sûreté Inspectors working in conjunction with Scotland Yard swiftly established that Eyraud and Gabrielle Bompard had returned to England and then embarked for New York.

On the 4th February, Inspectors Loudais and Houllier took up their trail.

The very next day, Eyraud was reported again at Liverpool, having returned from the United States, and his address from the 22nd January to the 5th February had been the Hotel America.

A detail was added. He had turned over the leaves of a treatise on extradition in front of a bookseller's shop.

On the 21st January a fresh dramatic coup occurred. Gabrielle Bompard, herself, went to the Prefecture of Police at Paris and asked to see the Prefect. She saw him, and only came out of his office to be put into the hands of Inspector Jaune, who had a warrant for her arrest.

Taken to Police Headquarters she made a statement about the crime that had only a distant connection with the truth. She said she only knew about the crime when Eyraud had got rid of the body. She added that she had left Eyraud on the 7th December at San Francisco, in order to follow another lover, who was perfectly straight and who had brought her back to Paris.

She had been living at the Hotel Terminus since the 18th January.

Smiling, and content with herself, her black eyes shining in a round face above a little mouth and a tip-tilted nose, her mind seemed to be occupied less with her moral situation in this affair than with a large hat in which she looked very seductive, and which she asked might be taken to the Hotel Terminus.

On the 26th January, tormented by inquisitors, she decided to tell the truth. She had known Eyraud since, quitting her family after some adventures, she had come to Paris to live as she willed.

Neither of them had any money. Eyraud had taken her to London in the hope of finding work there. Instead they found themselves worse off than before, and it was she who had had to ask for money for their needs from her family.

It was then that Eyraud suggested she should lure some rich lover to a rendezvous and blackmail him.

She agreed, and as they had to think out in advance what to do if the man should resist, in which case there would be a body to dispose of, Eyraud had bought in London the great trunk, a strong silken cord, a rope 4 yards long, and a pulley and tackle. On the 24th July, they returned to Paris, and hired a room on the ground floor at the end of a court, 3 Rue Tronson Ducoudray. Eyraud fixed up next day in the bedroom the pulley and the cord. It was now only necessary to lure a victim there. Eyraud proposed at first to bring a jeweller with a collection of valuable stones, but reflected that this would present serious difficulties. He then proposed to Gabrielle that they should try the Usher, Gouffe, who had several times shown a liking for her.

Gabrielle accepted this, and went out to meet him. She found him, a rendezvous was arranged, and Gouffe arrived at eight in the evening.

She made him sit down in a long chair, the back of which was turned towards an alcove in which Eyraud was hidden, put her arms about his neck in play, and then the silken cord she had about her waist. To the centre of this was fixed the rope from the pulley. Eyraud pulled with all his strength, and, drawn up into the air, Gouffe was hanged.

They searched him, put him into the sack prepared in advance, and doubled him up to get him into the trunk, which they fastened with care.

Then they had a champagne dinner! Next day the two accomplices, together with the trunk, left by train for Lyon, and descended at the Hotel de Toulouse.

It was urgently necessary for them to get rid of that terrible piece of luggage, which, on account of the heat, began to emit an insupportable smell. So Eyraud hired a carriage, and they drove into the country.

Near Millery, a deep ravine seemed to offer a sure resting-place for the corpse and one most unlikely to be found. Eyraud pulled out the trunk, pushed the body down, and continuing along the road for some kilometres destroyed the trunk and scattered the pieces.

The rest of the story offers little interest.

Arrested on the 21st May 1890, at Havana, Eyraud was extra-

dited, and brought back to France. He appeared before the Assize Court at the same time as Gabrielle Bompard submitted to the jury that she had only been a weak instrument in the hands of Eyraud, the instigator. The jury condemned her, however, to 20 years of penal servitude.

The "Affaire Eyraud" is, in our opinion, one of the most characteristic of the vilest type of crime, unique in many ways, committed with much skill and cleverness by a man of intelligence, lost through his vices.

A much more recent, and still more celebrated affair, which had as chief actor a sort of Bluebeard, will replace all others, for a time at least, as the leading example of multiple murder.

L'Affaire Landru: The Official Story

I now introduce Henri Désiré Landru, the greatest monster that France—perhaps the whole world—has ever known. Even at the Prefecture we still talk of this remarkable criminal with bated breath and with the light of interest in our eyes, for among all the many human monsters with whom we have been brought in contact none has displayed the devilish ingenuity of this man.

So much has already been written about this arch-murderer that I shall content myself here with giving a plain story of the case as it is set down on the closely typed sheets inserted between the files of the official dossier that bears the simple inscription "l'Affaire Landru" and the date of his execution. Few dossiers in the Sûreté are so massive as this one, and as I pore again over its pages and the accompanying mass of documents, as I turn the leaves of his infamous diary, I am once again appalled by the callous brutality of this man who stirred the whole world at the time of his memorable trial.

If the following recital of his crimes and the details of his arrest and condemnation err in the matter of colourful writing, I would say in extenuation that here is the true unembroidered official story. Others have written with perhaps an even greater knowledge of the man than the Police. Many theories have been propounded as to the manner in which he disposed of the bodies of his victims, but I say here that as far as the authorities are concerned the manner in which he made away with the *corpus delicti* in each of his murders (with the exception of the arms, hands, and heads) remains a mystery to us still. . . . Landru carried that secret to his grave. We have only our own conclusions about the affair, and these I set down here.

Landru's case is the most astonishing of our days, not only

because of the length of his criminal career, but still more so from the attitude and personality of the criminal, who was convicted of eleven murders.

Methodical precautions, extreme care to avoid incriminating evidence, remarkable cleverness, and, above all, an obstinate silence—all these were traits of Landru throughout his criminal career.

This strange person, whose appearance was certainly not seductive—he was inclined to baldness, had a large nose, and furtive and uneasy eyes beneath bushy eyebrows—was without doubt very intelligent.

As an inferior clerk he began life in an obscure but honourable manner. His attempts to improve his position meeting without success, he did not hesitate to take to crime as an alternative.

His record was already stained with half a dozen severe sentences by 1914. Also he had taken care to change his nominal trade, and shifted his addresses to escape the imposition of a term of four years' imprisonment, to which he had been sentenced, in default, on the 20th July 1914, for swindling.

Living expensively, and at the same time finding it necessary to hide his personality, Landru, like a well-trained horse, solved the problem by continuing to practise frauds.

At that time, the War having started, it was more difficult than usual to follow such a course. It was this, doubtless, that led Landru to add murder to fraud.

In fact, he practised crime with the same address as less serious misdemeanours. Very careful and circumspect, he surrounded himself with an atmosphere of mystery, and he might forever have escaped from justice if, under the urge of necessity and contrary to his usual principles, he had not been so foolish as to take up with women who had near relatives.

This led to his downfall. Still it was necessary, in order to convict him, to carry out a long and difficult inquiry, setting the Police and magistrates a very severe task.

Like many others, this notorious case began in a very simple manner, the importance of which no one could have foretold.

At the beginning of January 1919, a woman named Lacoste, seeking her sister, of the name of Buisson, whom she had not seen for two years, wrote to the Mayor of Gambais and asked him for information about her. She had gone to that place in 1915, in company with a man named Frémyet, or Cuchet, and no further news had been received of her.

Already in 1917 a woman of the name of Pellat, living in the Boulevard Voltaire at Paris, had informed the Mayor's office at

Gambais of the disappearance, since the 16th December 1916, of a widow named Colomb, her sister, who had gone to Gambais in the company of the same man.

The Mayor at once ordered the Police to make an inquiry. They reported to Madame Pellat that nobody had put up at any house in Gambais under these names.

In a second letter Madame Pellat gave further details. The house referred to was outside the town and quite isolated. Moreover, her sister had withdrawn some money from the bank before coming to see her, and might be the victim of foul play. At the same time she sent a photograph of her sister and a description of the so-called engineer in whose company she had travelled to Gambais.

The fact that there was no one at Gambais of the name given led the Police to suppose that there was a mistake in the locality, and an inquiry was opened by the Detective Department of Versailles. This revealed the following facts:

On the 1st May 1915, the man Frémyet had inserted in *Le Journal* the following advertisement:

"A gentleman, 45 years old, single, with 4000 francs and house, wishes to marry a lady of about his own age. Reply, C.T.45."

Amongst the numerous answers he received was that of the widow Buisson, whose letter ran thus:

"Excuse my writing, but I saw your advertisement in the paper. I am a widow, and have 12,000 francs. I am 44 years of age, and have a son at the front. I am all alone, and want to get settled again. If this suits you, etc., etc. B.L. 42, Bureau Poste Restante."

An interview followed, relations were established, and the man, under the name of Frémyet, was introduced by Madame Buisson to her sister as her fiancé.

In April 1917 he persuaded her to come and live with him in lodgings he had rented at 113 Boulevard Ney. By May, he had taken her to his villa at Gambais.

On the 10th August 1917, on his advice, she drew from the Crédit Lyonnais the securities she had placed there. The same day Frémyet invited Madame Lacoste to spend a few days at Gambais with her sister. She accepted and received Frémyet's hospitality in the lonely villa, well chosen for carrying out his plans. Nothing happened during this short stay, and Madame Lacoste left her sister there on the 17th August, little thinking that she had seen her for the last time. On the 18th, Frémyet and Madame Buisson went to Paris; on the 19th, they returned

to Gambais and on the 24th Frémyet went back to Paris . . . alone!

During these last days Madame Buisson had been seen by nobody. Frémyet, indeed, on the 4th November had visited Madame Lacoste, but he was alone. She began then to think that her sister was indifferent to her, but when her silence continued she began to be alarmed.

Approaching the question of this mysterious disappearance at the first notice given by the Mairie at Gambais, Inspector Voisin of the Sûreté, began to study the two cases at the same time. After reviewing all the facts this officer was at once struck by a notable coincidence; that the woman Collomb had entered into relations with Frémyet just after the appearance in *Le Journal* of the advertisement of 1st May 1915. To her, too, this man had suggested marriage; with her, too, he had cohabited in the Rue de Châteaudun, in a lodging to which she had brought some furniture. She, also, had told her sister that she was going to a villa at Gambais. Finally, she, also, disappeared at the end of this journey on the 25th December 1915.

In spite of this, however, we at the Prefecture did not suppose, at least at first, that the man in question had killed these women. We suspected that he was a procurer who had placed them in a brothel. However, on the facts being placed before me I ordered his arrest, which was carried into effect with little difficulty since Sûreté detectives had been keeping a watch over him from the first day he came under suspicion.

As he refused to give any explanation on being charged, a search was made at once in the villa at Gambais. Preoccupied and upset, he tried to divert the searchers from the out-houses behind the villa. The police officers noticed this, and further noted in one of the barns a heap of cinders, seemingly products of fires lit in the house, to which they attached no further importance. In the villa a trunk was found marked "C. L." containing feminine underwear marked with the same letters, and some toilet necessaries. It was impossible for the man who called himself "Frémyet" to deny that these things had belonged to Madame Buisson, whose maiden name had been Célestine Lavie. Closely questioned, he ended by stating that the woman had sold her trunk and its contents to him before leaving him. He refused any other explanation.

One of my Inspectors, Dautel, now made a careful search in the garden, and unearthed the bodies of three dogs which had obviously been strangled. "Frémyet," however, still refused to make any explanation. Here, an assistant was able to state

that an unknown woman had brought these dogs to the villa in 1919!

On the 17th April, a new disappearance, exactly similar to the other two, and also having as a starting point an advertisement that had appeared in March 1915, was reported to the Police. A man named Fridmann stated that his sister-in-law, a Madame Cuchet, living at 67, Faubourg Saint-Denis with her son André, and working at home, with the assistance of two girls, in the manufacture of underwear, had made the acquaintance of a man named Diard in March 1915, who described himself as an "agent," and who was none other than "Frémyet."

He became engaged to her. Even the date of the marriage was fixed; and she went to spend some days at Gambais at the end of June 1914.

One morning Diard left her—"just for the day," he said—but as he was absent for several days, Madame Cuchet, becoming uneasy, asked her brother-in-law to come and advise her as to what she had better do.

She told him on his arrival that she was unable to leave because "Diard" had put all her money in a locked cash-box. Uneasy in his turn, Fridmann advised his sister-in-law to leave Gambais, and to take all her own money from the box, which he forced open.

It was then that the name of *Landru* first came to be known. The box contained his civil papers, and a "*livret de famille*" (an obligatory booklet containing all particulars as to marriage of the man to whom it is issued, his children, and so on) under that name, whereas Diard had represented himself as a bachelor. M. Fridmann then persuaded his sister-in-law to break off all connection with the liar at once.

On returning to Paris the information he collected confirmed his bad impression of Landru. He learned the latter was married and seemed to live by swindling. Unhappily the sister-in-law, instead of breaking with the man, went back to Gambais with her son at the beginning of August, and that was the last her family heard of them.

Monsieur Fridmann added that his sister-in-law possessed about one hundred thousand francs, partly in cash and partly in furniture and jewellery, and that he had little doubt that Landru had appropriated it all. The accusations of murder were now more seriously considered. A pocket-book of Landru's made this much more certain. In spite of the assumed names used therein (Brésil, Crozatier) and the fact that women's names had been changed into masculine form (such as Jean for Jeanne), it paved the way for

identification of the women who had been intimate with Landru, and made it possible to reconstitute his actions.

These clues, completed by inquiries made in Paris at his various lodgings, established that a whole series of women had disappeared in the same mysterious way after they had gone to live with him at Gambais, or before that at Vernouillet.

A Court of Inquiry was constituted, including Doctor Paul and M. Bayle, Director of the Department of Identification. Pieces of calcined bones and teeth were found in the refuse heap by the out-houses. In the kitchen furnace and the ashpit more bones were found, the origin of which could not be doubted. Others were found, mixed with fragments of half-burnt coal and marked by fire, in the garden in the main just beneath the walls.

Experts who examined them counted forty-seven teeth or pieces of teeth, and collected more than one thousand five hundred grammes (between three and four pounds) of bones that had belonged to human bodies, mostly parts of skulls. These experts stated definitely that they came from three skulls, six hands, and five feet; and that the bones had been cut with a fitter's saw. There was further found in the heap a large quantity of the débris of different objects; ordinary metal hooks, buttons—some of them of mother-of-pearl and glass—and other hooks for corsets and garters.

Experiments made by M. Kling, Director of the Municipal Laboratory, M. Bayle, and M. Kohn-Abrest, Director of the Laboratory of Toxicology, established the fact that despite its modest dimensions, the kitchen stove at Gambais would allow of all these cremations being made, and that with very little coal.

The experts further came to the conclusion that the stove had not been used to burn human bodies but only hands, feet, and skulls, that is to say, the parts most likely to be identified.

Inquiries made in the district established the fact that Landru had, a number of times, built up a fire so intense that the whole neighbourhood had noticed it: that the basement fireplace designed for washing clothes often emitted abnormal smoke; that Landru had burnt in the open stuff that spread an odour of burnt fat; and, finally, that he often brought back in his small motor-lorry, in the middle of summer, considerable quantities of coal which he took into his house.

Information was obtained of his movements, on dark nights, near quarries and ponds, no doubt to hide such portions of the bodies as the fire had not consumed.

The inquiry finally established the disappearance, in exactly the same circumstances—that is to say, following a promise of

marriage and a trip into the country—of seven other women, viz. Madame Laborde Line, Madame Guillin, Madame Héon, Madame Babelay, Madame Jaume, Madame Pascal, and Madame Marchadier.

All had entered into communication with Landru through advertisements since the month of May 1915.

Madame Laborde Line (the Brésil of the notebook) became known to him immediately after the advertisement of the 1st May 1915, and since the following June she had disappeared.

Again through the samo advertisement of the 1st May, he came to know Madame Guillin, a widow, who was marked in the notebook as Crozatier. He had taken her into the country at the end of July, after she had given up her rooms in Paris.

Nothing had been heard from her after the 2nd August.

Another matrimonial advertisement on the 12th June 1915 had drawn in another widow, Madame Héon (Havre in the pocket-book). He had announced this time that he wanted a wife to go with him to the colonies, and after she had sold her furniture she accompanied him into the country and was seen no more.

Again an advertisement appeared in the *Echo de Paris* on the 9th March 1917, and this brought him Madame Jaume (Lyane in his book). She went with him to Gambais on the 25th November, and was never seen again. In the same month of March, he made the acquaintance of a Madame Babelay, who disappeared on the 12th August.

In 1918, at a date not quite determined, he made the acquaintance of Madame Pascal. She disappeared in April, about the 5th.

Finally, in December 1918, he met a Madame Marchadier. She also went to Gambais, on the 13th January. On the 14th the three dogs she had brought with her were killed by Landru. And nothing more was ever heard of the woman.

So the charges against Landru were eleven murders. What motive had driven him to commit them? Self-interest.

He killed his victims only to steal their money, their investments, their jewellery, and their furniture.

Forced to find money to meet his expenses, he had lured them to his house to rob them.

When Madame Collomb disappeared on the 27th December 1915, the inquiry established the fact that Landru possessed a bank-balance of only 20 francs 55 centimes. But the same day 4997 francs odd were added to it.

On the 31st August he had only 88·30 francs to his credit. Madame Buisson disappeared and Landru's account was enriched by 1125 francs.

The same occurred after each case.

He was not satisfied with mere cash. He sold all their possessions, including jewellery and furniture. It was so in the case of Madame Guillin. He sold through the Banque de France, by means of forgery, securities this woman had deposited there, and which raised a sum of 11,000 francs.

It will be understood that we cannot go into all the details of this affair, which would fill a volume by itself. Such being the case, we shall make a special point of but one thing, that it was only for personal gain that Landru had carried out these abominable crimes.

We have already spoken of the celebrated notebook that gave the clue to everything at the inquest.

This pocket-book, which revealed a nature strangely acute and careful of details, informed us of each occasion on which Landru enticed someone into the country. He had no intention of bringing back his companions, and thought it unnecessary to take return railway tickets for them. He bought singles only!

The same book contained notes giving with exactitude the dates, and even the hours, that his victims had died. I have the actual book before me as I write.

For instance, he had noted:

" 27th December, Madame Collomb, 4 a.m. or 4.7 p.m."
" 12th April 1917, Madame Babelay, at 4 p.m."
" 1st September, Madame Buisson, 10.15."
" 26th November 1917, Madame Jaume, at 5 o'clock."
" 5th April, Madame Pascal, at 5.15 p.m."

Some people are astonished at the simpleness of his victims, so let us form a judgment through some extracts from his correspondence, which is still carefully preserved in his dossier at the Sûreté. They will show that he played his part to perfection. He wrote thus to one of his future fiancées:

" Money considerations do not influence me at all in the choice of a wife. I want above all things a woman who can love, a good housekeeper interested in her home; and of sincere affection, she must be a dear comrade as well as loyal and attractive.

" How I could love her if I felt her friendly shoulder against mine, with no reserves or frivolities, just as I lived with my tender-hearted mother, who I think must have imbued my mind with her own sensitiveness."

In another letter he uses again this love of a son for his mother, and tells of the only affection of his life—" the care of his mother."

At other times in his correspondence, he speaks of infinitely

delicate sentiments : " I am passing just now half a week in the country, in a small cottage outside the suburbs. Its position and surroundings are enchanting. There is wanting, however, for me, that ray that illumines all the world, the eyes that lure, the tones that trouble one so deliciously, the loved companion who delights one, makes everything beautiful, and is the life of all things.

" May I have the pleasure of seeing you here, even as a simple visitor ?

" I am opening to you all the contents of my lonely heart. Don't laugh. The hand of a friend is so rare in these days."

It is these words—" the hand of a friend "—that arrest us here. When we think of what that hand had done, we remain dumbfounded before the cruel and sinister cynicism of the man who wrote it !

Landru, as we have already said, was married. He had married on the 7th October 1893 at the Mairie of the 5th Arrondissement, a young laundry-girl, Catherine Remy, by whom he had already had a daughter who was legitimized by the marriage.

He lived then with his mother-in-law at 31, Rue de Jussieu ; later he went to Clamart, then to 283, Rue Vaugirard, and finally, after some shifting about, out to Malakoff, his address being 12, Rue de Châtillon.

In 1914, he deserted his wife to escape from judicial pursuit, but that did not stop him altogether from sending to her at different times money collected off his victims (notably on the 15th August 1915 a watch and chain he had taken from Madame Cuchet ; and in 1917, a gold bracelet).

In 1895 and 1897 two sons were born to him, Charles and Maurice, who were indefinitely connected with his business affairs through having disposed of various pieces of furniture.

Landru's system of defence consisted in the main of explaining nothing, so that he might not be compromised. On one of the rare occasions on which he made an answer—6th August—he said :

" It is the business of the prosecution to prove my guilt. If they hope to do so by my contradictions they need not reckon on it." After that, his replies were limited to the words : " I have nothing to say."

How did he kill his victims ? That is a secret he kept to himself. It has been suggested that he kept a light cord hidden under his bolster, but evidence in favour of this has never been found.

And, what did he do with the bodies of the victims, whose heads, feet, and hands only were burned in the kitchen stove ? This question has been made the object of much research, and many ponds around Gambais have been dragged without result.

Doubtless, as generally supposed, he could have disposed of them by some chemical process. But as far as we of the Police are concerned we adopt a different hypothesis and one much simpler, that he succeeded in getting rid of the bodies of his victims in some public refuse pit nearby.

These are places where a special service deposits, daily, refuse and garbage from houses and roads. In fact, these loads of refuse deposited from day to day cause a difference of level of, on occasions, several metres, according to the thousands of tons of matter shot in.

It would be quite sufficient, then, for the murderer to drop the mutilated bodies in such a place, after nightfall, covering them up very lightly, and the next day they would be lost for ever in a veritable sea of filth.

Anyway, Landru took his secret with him to the grave.

He died as callously and stoically as he had lived. Unemotionally he went to the guillotine. There was no speech by the condemned man, no hysterics or theatrical gestures, in spite of what the newspapers said. He walked firmly, made no confession, and died calmly. Perhaps, as condemned men go, he was one of the bravest villains ever executed in France. No one mourned him. He died alone before a silent crowd, and we officials felt no compassion for him. Justice was served.