CHAPTER V

FAMOUS BANDITS

FRANCE is the home of the bandit—that lawless, unscrupulous and generally murderous criminal pervert who may indeed be compared with the wolf he so much resembles, for he is, indeed, the wolf of the underworld. The criminal who works in company with others, invariably carries arms, and often, in fact generally, makes use of automobiles, first appeared in France many years ago. The example set by the bandits I shall deal with in this chapter has been copied extensively not only in the United States of America, but also in Great Britain.

The term bandit explains itself. He is an individual affiliated to a band entirely without fixed laws or regulations except those originated by himself or by the leader of the gang to which he has attached himself. Living by violence, he is without any definite purpose except the annexation of the property of others, and he is an habitual criminal in the clearest sense of the term.

Bandit gangs still exist in Paris, although their vogue declined after the routing of the Bonnot Gang by the Police, about which affair you will learn in this chapter.

These bandit gangs are not quite similar, however; there are many varieties, for these people are specialists, and usually pursue one kind of crime. Consequently there are burglars of villas; those who break through walls; others who steal valuable antiques, or rob churches; there are also bands of hotel-thieves, pickpockets, swindlers, etc.

In the eyes of the public, the real bandits are those who, to obtain the coveted goods, do not hesitate to take the lives of those who obstruct them in their purpose.

Of this kind, the most famous gang of modern times in France has been that known as the "Tragic Bandits." They excited public opinion to the greatest degree, and exceptional measures were taken to suppress them.

"Never," as the Attorney-General Fabre wrote in his charge, "have we been threatened with such a menace. This outbreak of brigands, working in full daylight, with the latest tools that modern industry can provide, was truly surprising and dangerous for our social peace."

"The Association of Law-breakers," as they were named on the charge-sheet, was a well-merited description, for they were self-styled anarchists, and seemed to have no drawn-up regulations. If there ever were any, they never came into the hands of the

Police. The trial at the Assizes threw no light on this, and many points still remain obscure.

We have, however, information about other bands that were less famous. Police-Inspector Rossignol, who headed the Sûreté Squad whose especial duty it was to fight these criminals, gives, *in extenso*, the regulations of the band Abadie-Gille and others, which had no less than 41 articles. We give here some typical extracts :

" Art. 5. It is expressly forbidden to commit any crime without sanction of the leaders, under penalty of death.

" Art. 6. No member of the band may have a special mistress. They may have them for one day only, and no information must be given them under penalty of death.

" Art. 8. All clothes stained with blood must be burned and the ashes scattered.

" Art. 22. No member must make a confession, and should pre-arrange an alibi.

" Art. 27. No one can retire from the band, under penalty of death, except where a member goes to live far off, and even then the leaders will keep their right to punish in case of revelations.

" Art. 31. Jewels taken in the burglaries must be handed over to the chief. No one else may carry them about or try to sell them. They will be common property and sold abroad.

" Art. 40. Members shall . carry no papers proving their identity.

" Art. 41. Every member must take an oath, on a knife in front of the Chief, never to disclose our regulations."

These clauses, however, did not prevent Gille and Abadie from being arrested, a very short time after they were drawn up, for the murder of the widow Binsengeaud at Montreuil ; and settling on the scaffold their accounts with Society.

Foreign countries also have their associated criminals. The best known are Italian : the Camorra at Naples, the Mafia in Sicily, and the Mano Nera (The Black Hand) in America. They differ from the usual French bands in that they are under much severer laws which are pitilessly enforced.

In the Camorra, " the Piciotto " or neophyte must swear : " To show himself an enemy to all authority ; to have no relations whatever with the police ; never to denounce thieves—but to deal with them on the contrary with a special affection as men who continually expose their lives." (Lombroso.) It is not possible to become a member of this association—" piciotto di ogara "—until after having killed a person named by the Camorra.

The Camorra drew its funds from extortion. Its demands had to be obeyed under penalty of death. The Camorrist Tribunal, composed of 24 members, condemned to death and "executed" in 1906 one of themselves named Cuocolo, who had given information to the Police.

The Mafia is a Sicilian band, equally against authority. It is engaged at the same time in robbery, blackmail, and brigandage. When the Council condemns someone to death, his warning is a cross traced on his door.

In America a great number of crimes are attributed to the "Black Hand." They are mostly murders, or robbery with threats, and are usually committed by Italian immigrants who have tried to implant there the customs of the Camorra and Mafia as in their own country.

The crimes attempted by the Black Hand do not seem to be the work of a powerful central organization with control, but rather that of isolated bands.

To-day there does not actually exist in France any such association as those in Italy; their existence would not be possible, or at any rate, they would have a very short run.

The only band that had any analogy with them, though remotely, is that of which we have already spoken under the name of the "Tragic Bandits."

We shall review the outrages of typical bandits in chronological order. To begin with we shall present the Bonnot Gang; then the La Villette Gang; the Robbers of Train 5; and finally those who attacked the post office of Cormeilles-en-Parisis.

The Bonnot Gang (The Tragic Bandits)

This gang came into being at the beginning of January 1911.

It had already committed, without detection, a dozen crimes of moderate importance—of which the two boldest were a robbery at the station of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and another at the post office at Romainville—when on the 21st December 1911, it was brought sharply before public notice, by a cynical and brutal crime.

That day about nine o'clock in the morning the bank messenger Gaby, who worked for the "Société Générale," accompanied, according to rule, by a colleague of the Saint-Ouen Branch, was carrying as usual to another branch at 146 Rue Ordener, the necessary funds for the day's operations. At "La Trinité," he had taken a tram for Enghien, and had alighted at the halt at Ordener.

About a hundred yards from the halt, another employé, Peemans, belonging to the Enghien Branch, was waiting for him.

Gaby carried two small bags joined together by a strap, containing 318,000 francs worth of bonds: he held in his right hand a small canvas bag with 5500 francs cash in it; and he had, in an inner pocket on the left side of his coat, a pocket-book containing 20,000 francs in notes and gold.

He was walking towards the bank with Peemans by his side, when a man hidden behind a tree about twenty yards short of it, stepped out and seized the money with his left hand, whilst with the right he fired a shot from a revolver straight into the messenger's chest. Gaby fell at the foot of a tree, but without releasing his portfolios, whilst Peemans ran in the direction of the bank for help.

The same man then fired on the unfortunate bank messenger again and wounded him mortally. He snatched all the things he was carrying and passed them quickly over to another, who in his turn handed them to a third who was sitting on the driving seat of a motor-car halted, with engine running, in front of No. 50 Rue Ordener.

Rushing into the bank, Peemans had cried: "Our messenger is being attacked." All the employés rushed into the road and saw there a man joining another on the front seat of the car. While it was starting off, a third, who was wearing a hard felt hat, fired rapidly at anyone who tried to approach, finally jumping on the footboard beside the driver. The car gathered speed, and disappeared towards the Rue des Cloys.

It came up behind a one-horse vehicle driven by a Monsieur Sisling. Fearing that he might turn and bar the road, the man with the bowler hat fired at him.

The bullet passed through the curtain of his carriage, about the height of the driver's chest, and buried itself in the wall of a tobacconist's shop.

The same man, always standing on the footboard, then shot several times at a chauffeur who followed them, a M. Moser, and their car then arrived at the corner of the Rue des Cloys and Montcalm.

Coming out of this last road a coal cart turned in the opposite direction to them. To force its driver to leave them room to pass the man with the revolver fired at him but missed.

All these incidents had slowed up the escape of the criminals. The pursuers were gaining. Then two arms holding revolvers were thrust out of the window, and began shooting to the rear.

The pursuers were checked; the criminals gained ground and

disappeared at the corner of the Rue Marcadet and the Rue Damrémont.

The car used to carry out this affair was found next day in the Rue Alexandre Dumas at Dieppe, where it had been abandoned. This automobile, a Delaunay-Belleville, had been stolen on the night of 13th–14th December, from a Monsieur Normand, living at 12 Rue du Chalet at Boulogne-sur-Seine.

Whilst the Police searched for the authors of the crime in the Rue Ordener, the latter were preparing other coups and were not slow in carrying them out.

On the night of the 23rd–24th December 1911, a gunsmith's and general sporting store, belonging to M. Foury, was burgled. After having cut through an iron grille, the thieves had removed a large number of revolvers and automatics.

On the night of the 8th–9th January 1912, the American gun-shop of Smith and Wesson, at 54 Boulevard Haussmann, was entered in its turn. Entry was made through the basement, by tearing out some bars in a window, and communication was made with the shop by a staircase. About sixteen hundred francs was taken from the cash drawer ; and a large number of revolvers, guns, and carbines were found to be missing.

The band was arming itself.

On the night of the 15th–16th February, a new theft of a car took place at Béziers, in the Hérault, from a manufacturer, M. Malbec.

It was later found with a broken wheel at Arnay-le-Duc. This accident had prevented its occupants, as was discovered afterwards, from carrying out at Nimes on the 23rd February a new attempt on a cashier who worked for the Comptoir d'Escompte at the moment he would have to pass the Arena.

So this scheme fell through, but the band was not slow in getting another car.

On the night of the 26th–27th February, the door of the garage of M. Buisson, a commercial traveller in wines, at Saint-Mande (Seine) was broken open and his powerful car removed.

This, in its turn, was found some days later at Pont-sur-Yonne, a new accident having forced the criminals to stop. They then went to the outskirts of Alais (Gard) to crack a safe, which contained a large sum of money to pay workmen in the mines at Lavernède.

Forced again to abandon their project, which could only yield profit on a fixed date, they repaired their machine and came back to Paris.

Their return heralded another tragedy.

At 7 p.m. their car turned into the Rue d'Amsterdam. Contrary to the regulations, they had just turned round a refuge in mid-street on the left side, when Constable François Garnier, on duty at this refuge, asked them for their papers. Without answer the three occupants of the car restarted it. The Police *agent* then jumped on the footboard, but before it had gone fifteen yards three revolver shots were fired at him point-blank. The murderers profited by the panic they had created to escape.

Such an incident was, doubtless, little to them, for the same night after this event, the same car with the same bandits in it went to Pontoise and stopped in the Town Hall Square before the offices of a lawyer, M. Tintant.

After getting out they climbed over an eight-foot wall, entered a small yard, and broke open the office door with a jemmy. They had already moved the safe when the lawyer, awakened by the noise, called from his window to a baker's boy who was passing, and asked him to see if his office door was open or not.

The young baker, named Coquerel, pushing the door with his hand, found it open and in an access of fear flattened himself against the wall. It was just as well for him, as two bullets fired from the inside passed through the glass panels.

A man then came out of the office and stood, revolver in hand, facing the house. Then two others appeared and moved toward their car, firing at both Coquerel and Tintant.

M. Tintant, who had a revolver, replied to the shots, but three bullets flattened themselves around him and forced him to abandon his position. One of them grazed his ear, whilst another smashed the mirror of a wardrobe. After this fusillade, the bandits disappeared into the night.

Next morning, the auto, which the burglars had set on fire after pouring petrol over it, was found in flames at Saint-Ouen. The fire was successfully put out. The car was that of M. Buisson. When it was brought back to him, he stated that the wire controlling the sparking and the brake had been removed from the magneto, showing that the motorists who had used the car to carry out their crime had amongst them a very skilful chauffeur.

The authors of these crimes were no longer unknown to the Police. If they had not managed to arrest them yet, they had at least identified a certain number and had discovered that they were members of a dangerous band with anarchistical principles, who had attended meetings arranged by the newspaper *L'Anarchie*, first at No. 16 Rue de Bagnolet, Romainville; then at Paris, Rue Fessart 24; and finally at Pavillon-sous-Bois, at the house of a man named Rimbault. A great deal was talked

amongst them of theft, which was defined as "Individual reprisals on the Bourgeoisie."

It was now known that members of this band were: Garnier, Bonnot, Dieudonné, Carouy, Metge, Valet, Kilbatchiche, Payer, De Böé, and finally Rimbault.

Inquiries made in January in quarters occupied by Rimbault, Metge, Valet, Carouy, and Renard, brought to light postage-stamps stolen during the burglary at the Romainville Post Office.

Finger-prints obtained in that office by the Judicial Identity Department corresponded with those of Metge.

During the course of other researches, there were later discovered in the possession of Renard, Kilbatchiche, and his mistress, Mme Maitrejean, who was arrested, arms stolen from Foury's shop at 70 Rue Lafayette.

But, so far, no active member of this formidable gang had been arrested.

The Press began to take the matter up, and the populace, who lived in fear of fresh outbursts, was nervous. The Police worked for decisive results.

Suspected of having been implicated in the affair of the Rue Ordener, De Böé, editor of the paper called *L'Anarchie*, was first arrested, together with a man named Dieudonné, to whom De Böé had just paid a visit and who was very well known in anarchist circles. His companion Louise Kaiser, otherwise known as "The Red Venus," was also arrested.

Confronted by the cashier Gaby, Dieudonné was recognized by him as the man who had shot him.

A little later two other members of the band—Belloni and Rodriguez—wanted for trying to sell securities stolen from Gaby at Amsterdam were arrested.

On the 20th March the Detective Commissioner and the Examining Magistrate received a letter signed Garnier—whose signature could not be doubted because it was counter-signed with finger-prints—in which the bandit wrote: "I declare that Dieudonné is innocent of the crime, of which you know that I alone am guilty."

In spite of the rhodomontades of Garnier, his situation and that of the other members of his gang was difficult. Their crimes had not brought them in the great results they had hoped for; their gains had to be shared among too many people. With the Police on their track, these bandits had to find, by some bold stroke, a way out of a situation which was fast becoming critical.

On the 25th March, about eight o'clock in the morning, the chauffeur Mathille, accompanied by M. Cerisolles, was driving an

automobile of De Dion make, destined for a M. Rouge, from Paris to Nice.

He was driving through the forest of Sénart, and had passed Montgeron, when three individuals, who seemed to be lunching by the roadside, made a sign to him to pull up.

Mathille stopped. One of the men then said to him: "It's your car we want."

As the chauffeur did not seem inclined to fall in with this injunction, three shots were at once fired at him. He clapped his hands to his stomach and fell mortally wounded, whilst M. Cerisolles, instinctively putting his hands in front of his face, received two bullets through them and fell in the road, where he later died.

The murderers were then joined by three others, who had been hidden in the ditch by the roadside, and they all climbed into the car, which disappeared in the direction of Villeneuve-Saint-Georges.

This crime was but a prologue, committed to secure a car for the carrying out of another crime some considerable distance away.

At 10 a.m. the stolen car stopped before the bank buildings of the "Société Générale" at Chantilly. Four men got out—Garnier, Valet, Monier, and Callemin—who burst in, revolver in hand. There were only three employés, and they were shot at once.

Messieurs Trinquier and Legendre were killed immediately; the third clerk, young Guilbert, seventeen years old, was hit in the leg and hid behind the counter. A fourth, M. Combe, just entering from the bank cellar, had several shots fired at him but all of them missed.

One man—undoubtedly Bonnot—had remained at the wheel of the car and a sixth—Soudy—armed with a carbine and stationed at a corner of the square, fired generally at the passers-by to prevent any interference.

The assassins penetrated into the strong-room and rifled it, carrying off 47,500 francs in notes and gold. They then entered their car, which started quickly, covered by the man with the carbine.

This new raid provoked great agitation all over the country. Questions were asked in the Chamber, and the Police were roundly taxed with being incapable.

At this juncture, three sensational arrests took place.

Soudy, the man with the carbine, who was being sheltered by a friend at Berck-sur-Mer, was arrested on the 30th March by M. Join, a Sub-Commissioner of the Detective Department, as he

was stepping out of his friend's house. He was found to be carrying a "Browning," loaded with eight cartridges, and 1000 francs in notes and gold.

Almost at the same time M. Join made another coup. With the assistance of a subordinate, Roche, he arrested Carouy at the railway station of Lozère (Seine-et-Oise) just as he was buying a ticket. The latter had unusual strength, but was stunned with a blow and handcuffed before he could defend himself. Two automatic pistols were found on him.

Taken to Police Headquarters, he swallowed the contents of a packet hidden in his trouser belt and cried out: "Good-bye, everyone!"

He thought he had swallowed cyanide of potassium, but the chemist from whom he had bought it had only given him ferrocyanide. It merely made him very sick!

He denied all participation in the affairs of the band which was terrorizing Paris. He was further charged with assisting in the burglary of the post office at Romainville—where he had left his finger-prints—and another crime, which we have not mentioned here because it is a singular case and does not seem to implicate any others of the band, except Carouy and Metge. This was the murder at Thiais of a wealthy old man of ninety-one and his servant—a case in which M. Bertillon affirmed there were traces of these two bandits.

This mean crime had been committed with extreme savagery on the 3rd January 1912—three weeks after that of the Rue Ordener.

M. Moreau, the old man, had been found with his skull fractured by hammer blows and with thirteen knife-thrusts in his body, in a room on the first floor of the little house he owned in the Rue de l'Eglise at Thiais (Seine). In the next room the widow Arfeux lay on her bed, killed by hammer blows and with her nose broken. She had, moreover, been strangled.

Carouy denied this crime also.

Taken to the prison of the "Santé" he tried next day to cut open an artery with scissors.

Another sensational arrest happened on Sunday the 7th April. It was effected this time by M. Xavier Guichard, Head of the Detective Department. He arrested in the Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, in the house of an anarchist named Jouisan who had been sheltering him, the famous Raymond Callemin, known as "Raymond the Scientific."

The arrest was carried out so cleverly that this bandit also had no chance of using a firearm.

Three "Brownings" were found on him, each loaded with eight cartridges, and money to the amount of 5000 francs.

The two leaders, Bonnot and Garnier, and two others of the gang, Valet and Monier, could not so far be located.

Monier, who under the false name of "Etienne Elie" had been sheltered by a friend at Ivry, a soldier named Gauzy, had in fear of being arrested renounced this hospitality, and on the 18th April had left his host's house saying he was about to visit a friend.

This friend was none other than Bonnot.

On the 23rd April, at 10.30 p.m., Gauzy received Bonnot, and allowed him to rest in the room formerly occupied by Monier.

On the 24th April, at six in the morning, Monier was arrested at 56 Boulevard Ménilmontant.

On the same day M. Join, Sub-Chief of the Detective Department, accompanied by Chief Inspectors Colmar and Robert, and Inspectors Hingrand and Sévestre, arrived at Gauzy's quarters to make a search.

Gauzy was at the back of his shop in company with an anarchist named Cardi.

M. Join questioned them at once. "Is there anyone upstairs? Can we go up?" Gauzy answered "No one." "Then go up first," said Join.

Upstairs, Gauzy opened the door of his rooms on the first floor —a door that locked with two turns of the key—and stood aside to let the police pass. Inspector Robert pushed Gauzy along in front of him. He seemed reluctant to enter his own rooms.

After passing through an outer and a main room, they were about to enter a third, when a man stood before them with his hand in his coat pocket. The police officers gripped his arms, but the man—who was Bonnot—struggled and fell, dragging them with him. He dragged his right arm free and fired several shots, killing the Sub-Commissioner on the spot and seriously wounding Inspector Colmar.

When Inspector Robert entered the room, he found M. Join lying dead, Colmar badly wounded, and Bonnot stretched out at full length, as if dead also. He helped Inspector Colmar to descend the staircase. But Bonnot was not dead, and seized this chance to escape. Emerging on the landing, he opened an opposite door and passed through it, to find a woman preparing soup there.

Bonnot called out: "Let me pass, or I'll shoot." The woman got out of the way, and Bonnot hissed: "Give me the bed sheets."

The trembling woman murmured: "I haven't any." So Bonnot climbing out of the window slid down a rain-pipe into the garden, and left by a path leading to the no-man's land outside the fortifications.

The arrest of Gauzy and the anarchist Lorulot followed this drama, which excited the public to white heat.

Bonnot had to be arrested at all costs. He was sought for everywhere. One evening, the 28th April, he was suspected of hiding at Choisy-le-Roi in the barn of a man named Dubois.

All night long the Inspectors kept a watch on the barn, a poor brick and plaster place standing alone in the middle of a yard like a miniature fortress.

At dawn M. Guichard, head of the Detective Department, followed by several Inspectors, forced a way into the building. Dubois was there, and at once yelled out: "Escape! escape!" Pulling out a revolver he fired on the police, but without hitting anyone. Then he took cover behind a cart.

Almost at once a window opened upstairs and a shot rang out.

The police, looking up, saw a man in a shirt, revolver in hand, who went on shooting at them: it was Bonnot.

One Inspector was hit in the stomach: another in the arm.

Then, sheltering themselves as well as they could against this fusillade, the police began to organize a siege. Reinforcements, summoned by telephone, arrived soon after: a cordon of gendarmerie and onlookers watched from a distance.

Suddenly the besieged man appeared on the landing of the outside stairs, raised an arm, and fired. A continuous fusillade, the noisier as the Lebel rifles of the gendarmes joined in it, riddled the front of the house, making plaster and dust fly in all directions, and marking, as on a target, the points where the bullets had passed through the walls.

Bonnot now disappeared. Some seconds later he was again seen at a window on the left of the stairway and above the garage door, from which he began to empty his "Browning," taking aim very calmly. Then he disappeared again inside. Two inspectors were found to have been wounded by this last discharge. Again the fusillade raged, the bullets hitting all over the house. It was hoped that, by means of intense fire, some bullets would strike Bonnot.

Meanwhile, attracted by the noise and news of the siege, thousands of curious spectators had arrived and encircled the invested house. An end had to be made somehow, and it was decided to blow up the house with dynamite.

Lieutenant Fontan, of the Republican Guard, managed to reach the building, placed the explosives, and lit the fuse.

But the fuse spluttered out, and the operation had to be repeated. This time it succeeded, and under cover of the cloud of dust and the flames it had started, the Lieutenant and the police were able to dash to the house.

On the ground floor Dubois was found with a bullet through his head. They expected to see Bonnot for the last time appear at the top of the stairs, but the house remained silent. Sheltered behind a mattress M. Guichard and his Inspectors advanced, opened the door, and saw nothing.

All wondered what had happened to Bonnot.

He was found between two mattresses, where he had placed himself and committed suicide with a bullet through his brain.

Near him was a piece of paper, to which he had committed his last thoughts, and on which could be read :

" Madame Th.——is innocent. Gauzy also. Dieudonné also. P.D.——also. M. Th.——also. I die."

That he was proud of finding death by his own hand was evidenced by the last words.

A fortnight later Garnier and Valet, the two last representatives of the " Tragic Band," were, like Bonnot, tracked to their lair and killed on the spot, under the following circumstances :

On the 14th May, about half-past five in the evening, automobiles containing about fifty Inspectors raced towards Nogent-sur-Marne. It had just been learned that the two bandits were hiding in a cottage close to the Marne.

As the Chief rapped at the garden gate, Garnier and Valet, who were outside, fled into the house.

Two women then came towards the police, the mistresses of Garnier and Valet, who gave themselves up. This surrender of the women augured a desperate resistance on the part of their men, and revolver shots rang out at once from a window on the first floor. Policeman Fleury, hit in the chest, and Inspector Cagrousse, his right thigh pierced by a bullet, fell.

The story of Choisy-le-Roi began again. After putting his men under cover, M. Guichard sent for reinforcements. Firemen, Republican Guards, and a battalion of Zouaves arrived. A bugle was sounded and M. Guichard, advancing toward the house, called out : " In the name of the Law—Garnier ! Surrender ! . . . Valet ! Surrender ! " He had not finished when the two windows whence the first shots had come were thrown open, and a hot fire was directed at him—luckily without result.

The Police posted on the surrounding roofs and the Zouaves on a railway bridge, answered it with energy. But some other way had to be found.

Three bombs were hurled in quick succession. Before the last was thrown, a man appeared at the front door and emptied his "Browning" at the Inspectors, crying out "Assassins!" Inspector Délépine fell.

Holding up sheet-iron as shields other Inspectors charged up to the house, but were forced to recoil before the violent fusillade of the inmates which pierced the iron.

Finally recourse had to be made, as at Choisy-le-Roi, to dynamite. An explosion made a gaping breach in the house.

When the building was entered, the walls had traces of blood everywhere, and the bodies of the two men were soon discovered. Garnier and Valet had finished with life.

It was then two o'clock in the morning.

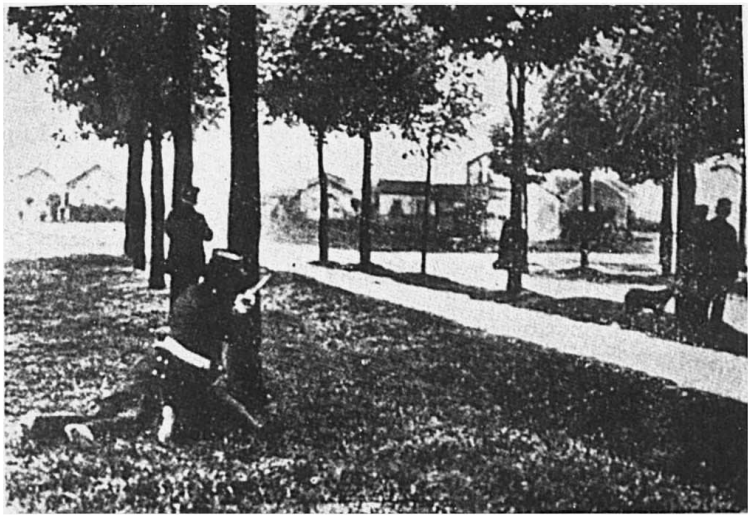
Despite the absence of the principal actors in the drama, the trial which opened at the Assize Courts in February 1913 and took up twenty-one sittings, was none the less of great importance. Twenty-six crimes were charged against the band, and seven other crimes it was almost certain they had committed were struck off the charge-list for lack of sufficient proof.

The President of the Court was Counsellor Couinaud. Procureur-Général Fabre, assisted by Advocate-General Bloch-Laroque, represented the Minister of Justice.

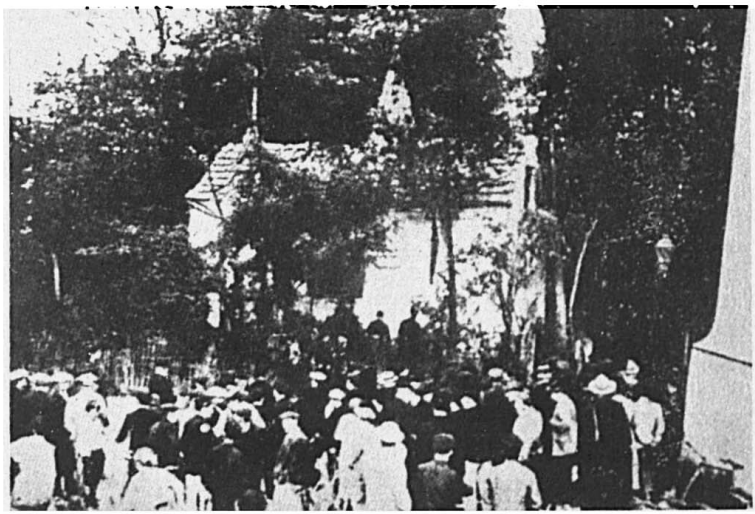
There were twenty accused, very young for the most part, amongst whom might be remarked the pale faces of Callemin, Soudy, and Belloni, the clean-shaven face of Kilbatchiche, and the singularly expressive features of a young woman who seemed half girl and half boy and wore a blue sailor collar over the black overall of a schoolgirl. It was whispered around: "But, that is Claudine!" She was Madame Maitrejean, usually called "Rirette," editress of the paper *l'Anarchie*.

Callemin, Monier, Soudy, Carouy, and Metge never ceased during the whole case to sneer and to call for "proofs." Kilbatchiche and Madame Maitrejean protested against the charges of association with criminals, which had placed them in the first rank of the accused. As for Dieudonné, he protested with remarkable vehemence against the accusation of participation in the affair of the Rue Ordener.

It seems undeniable, when one examines the dossier with the calm that time brings with it, that Dieudonné—who was pardoned last year by the President of the Republic after an escape which brought this case much publicity—was not concerned in the



SCENE OF BONNOT'S DEATH



HOUSE WHERE GARNIER AND VALET WERE KILLED

murder of Gaby. The demonstration of his innocence of this particular crime—the most serious charge against him—is based on several points.

1. Before formally recognizing Dieudonné as his aggressor, Gaby had no less formally recognized Garnier.

2. An authentic letter of Garnier, addressed before death to the Examining Magistrate, declared Dieudonné innocent of this crime.

3. Bonnot, before shooting himself, likewise declared in a document, which was a last testament, that Dieudonné was innocent.

4. Callemin, from the date of his arrest—that is, before the verdict—had given Inspector Béras information which should have established the fact that it was he, and not Dieudonné, who was mixed up in the affair of the Rue Ordener.

5. As soon as the verdict was pronounced, Callemin openly stated his own guilt and the innocence of Dieudonné.

Procureur-Général Fabre in a strong speech, claimed the heads of Callemin, Dieudonné, Soudy, Monier, Carouy, and Metge. He accentuated the anarchical ideas of the accused—"a covering excuse for a long series of crimes of many kinds against the community"—and drew some of their portraits in deep relief. He represented Dieudonné as a man who was "very prudent, very alert, very clever over alibis, and in the using of the masonry that exists in anarchist circles. A worthy emulator of Bonnot and Garnier, as bad and as dangerous as they were." Of Callemin, he said: "A ferocious youngster—the philosopher was only the disguise of the bandit."

Three hundred and sixty-three questions were put to the jury, who deliberated for fifteen hours on the 26th and 27th February 1913.

On the verdict of "guilty," Dieudonné, Callemin, Soudy, and Monier were condemned to death; Carouy and Metge to life sentences; Renard to six years' penal servitude; Kilbatchiche, Payer, and Crozat, to five years; and the others to lesser terms. Of all the men only Rodriguez was acquitted, as well as the women, Maitrejean, Schoop, and Barbe le Clech.

Next morning Carouy was found dead on his bed at the Conciergerie Prison. He had taken prussic acid.

On the 21st April 1913, before dawn, the guillotine was erected outside the "La Santé" Prison. At the same time Callemin, Soudy, and Monier were informed of the rejection of their appeals, while Dieudonné learned that the President of the

Republic had reprieved him from death. In the corridor, Soudy sang: "Hail, my last morning!" from *Faust*. Before the scaffold he said: "Au revoir." Callemin only laughed a sardonic laugh. Monier said in a firm voice: "Good-bye to all you gentlemen, and also to Society."

In four minutes three heads had fallen into the same basket.

The story of this band has been the cause of much ink being spilled. It is not in place, in such a general study as this, to draw any moral. It seems, however, that if "anarchy" had served as a common bond between all these men, its real leaders, Bonnot and Garnier, were neither morally nor intellectually servants of anarchy, but used it, as Procureur-Général Fabre said in his speech for the prosecution, "as a cloak to cover a long series of crimes against the community."

Bonnot, without any culture and useless for any brainwork, was technically an exceptional chauffeur, and an adroit and far-seeing robber. Morally, he had no principles; all conception of idealism was unknown to him.

Garnier, good-looking, strong, and clever, was equally lacking in culture and sensibility. He was—as Bonnot himself had said—a killing machine.

The life and death of these bandits have so drawn in relief their true mentality that it is not necessary to stress further the motives that actuated them. They were not, as some have pretended, victims of an idea, but criminals against the common rights of mankind unworthy of the least pity.

The La Villette Gang

I will now give details of the activities of a gang which acquired almost as much notoriety as the "Tragic Bandits." This time, however, we do not find a group of pseudo-anarchists but a connected band of avowed and bloodthirsty gunmen.

The fifteen men inculpated in this case did not take up the pretentious pose of "Bandits of Death," like the Bonnot Gang; nor did they cover their activities with theatrical expressions; nor did they try to attribute to a social ideal the misdeeds they committed to satisfy their desires. They were, as I have said, purely and simply themselves—that is to say, greedy and unscrupulous robbers, to whom assassination meant a means of livelihood.

Their crimes were carried out without ostentation. They preferred to work with as much secrecy as possible, while the Bonnot Gang loved to add drama to their crimes.

The Villette Gang were able by their discretion to commit certain number of crimes before attracting the close attention of the Law, and their chief, René Jean, proprietor of a scalding-house in abattoirs of La Villette, for a long time succeeded in posing as an honest tradesman.

Born on the 23rd December 1889, at Pantin, and son of honest artisans, he had learned, under divers masters, the trade of a butcher-boy. Married, but childless, sober, a worker who kept to himself, he hid, under this simple guise, his cupidity and absence of moral sense; and he concealed so cleverly his associations with the crooked haunts of La Villette, of Montmartre, and of the Porte Saint-Denis, that he came to enjoy the entire confidence of M. and Mme Dreyfus, wholesale butchers, to whom he became head clerk.

Whilst they did not cease to praise their employé, he thought only of how to leave them and set up on his own. A certain Davril having consented to take him as partner in running a scalding-house on condition that he should put 2000 francs into the business—which he did not possess—he coolly resolved to obtain the money by murdering his "patronne," and talked over this plan with two individuals—Sabau and Sarrazin—whose acquaintance he had made in the course of his wanderings in the bars of Montmartre.

These two were the right sort to understand him.

Sabau, known as Charlot, was a jack-of-all-trades—sometimes a bookmaker, sometimes a waiter, at other times barman in a brothel kept by his sister-in-law.

Sarrazin, in turn general dealer, broker of sewing-machines, agent in white-slave traffic, swindler, professional rough in the employ of thieves, pickpocket, and finally burglar, had, after several convictions, changed his methods. Instead of operating himself, he employed others and, becoming a receiver, arranged his business in the Bar of New Athens, in the Place Blanche.

René Jean, having furnished them with information about the habits of the Dreyfus couple, including the arrangement of their rooms, it was arranged between them that the job should be carried out and the proceeds shared.

And "as men of honour" they were to keep their word.

On the 24th April 1918, Madame Dreyfus was found dead in her room in the Rue de Flandre. She had been strangled with a cord.

Near her bed were found a pair of gloves, a bludgeon, and the cord in question. An empty wallet was also found, which had

contained 94,000 francs, brought home the same day by the victim, from the slaughter-houses of La Villette.

The concierge had seen two strangers leave the building. After long research, and the elimination of a number of suspects, the affair was for a time put aside.

Some days later René Jean paid into the office of the slaughter-houses the sum of 10,000 francs—his share for the information he had given—and, as partner of M. Davril, became half-owner of a business.

A little later, during the night of the 18th or 19th January 1919, two other mates of Sarrazin, Travail and Di Sema—dangerous criminals on account of their intelligence and energetic character—broke into the annexe belonging to the Bank of Blache and Gravereau, situated in the yard of the slaughter-houses of La Villette, and dynamited one of the safes, which, as it happened, was not the one in which the greater part of the funds were kept and only contained about 510 francs.

Di Sema already had several convictions against him. Travail, who was a specialist-burglar of jewellers' shops and a safe-breaker, was destined to give the Police much trouble in trailing him. Extradited from Rio de Janeiro, where he had taken refuge after the discovery of the crimes of the band under the name of Gérard, an exporter of indiarubber, he managed to escape from the ship when it re-victualled at Las Palmas—although he was in irons—and to reach Spain, where he was again arrested.

On the 10th August 1920, four other members of the band—dangerous men but not prominent—the brothers Allard, Adam, and another named Millot—attacked in the public street at 10 a.m. at Saint-Ouen a man named Bosselli, cashier of the firm of Lesieur. Leon Allard gave him two violent blows with a baton encased in rubber, whilst Adam snatched his portfolio containing 30,000 francs. An automobile driven by Georges Allard aided them to escape.

It has not been established that René Jean received any share whatever of the proceeds of these affairs. However, the money he had touched in the first instance and which had enabled him to establish himself was not enough for the needs of the business. To procure more, he resolved to kill one of his friends, named Mazet, cashier in the receiving office of the Boucherie de Paris. With this end in view he picked up three other bandits: Coquard, Macreau (surnamed "Jesus"), and a chauffeur who has never been identified.

Macreau was only a "super." As for Coquard—known to the girls of Montmartre as "Milo of the fine teeth"—he was

a man of good family who had turned out bad, and who had been put at the age of fifteen into a penitentiary. Cunning and wary, he kept out of direct action, and limited himself to organization.

In the beginning of January 1920, the day fixed for carrying out the crime, Coquard and Macreau, hanging about the "Société Générale," Rue de Flandre, noted the entrance of Mazet and observed him receiving a sum of 23,000 francs.

As he came out of the Bank René Jean met him as if by chance, called to him and offered him a seat in his car. Mazet accepted his friend's offer. The automobile had gone only a few yards when Jean surreptitiously drew a revolver and was aiming it at Mazet's head, when with a clumsy movement he hit him with the butt. Mazet leaped up and cried out. Disconcerted by this incident, Jean persuaded Mazet he was only joking. The coup having failed, Macreau and Coquard, who had stayed at hand to help René Jean with the body, slipped away.

René Jean was not the man to rest quiet under a check, and devised a fresh ambush, this time with new accomplices: Georges Allard, Bignon, and Desotot, who were, like the others, only accessories.

On the 5th October 1920, Georges Allard stole a Citröen car from the Avenue de Villers. On the 11th October he set Bignon and Desotot down at Pantin, close to where Mazet, carrying that day 225,000 francs, had to pass. Bignon was furnished with pepper to blind his victim, and a waterproof destined to be thrown over his head to stifle his cries. Georges Allard was to keep the car nearby, with engine running, ready to start at once.

Mazet approached Desotot and Bignon. The latter flung the pepper into his eyes and tried to enwrap his head, but the attacked man resisted vigorously. Desotot did not succeed in snatching away his portfolio, and passers-by intervened. Bignon and Allard, threatening all pursuers with their revolvers, escaped in the car. Desotot, audaciously declaring he was only a spectator, got away without trouble.

So Mazet escaped a second time.

This new check did not suit René Jean, who needed money urgently, both for himself and an intimate friend named Tissier, a bookmaker, a man who was quite unscrupulous, of violent temper and idle nature, who lived with a former harlot, and whose dream was to own an hotel. The chance of acquiring a lease, under good conditions, of premises at 8 Rue de la Villeneuve, had just occurred. But it was necessary to pay

cash down—10,000 francs, and 60,000 francs more before the 15th October.

The attempt on Mazet on the 11th October having failed, it became an urgent matter to obtain funds quickly, for Tissier, counting in advance on the results of the coup, had paid on the 27th September to the landlord of the hotel, the 10,000 francs necessary. René Jean had lent him this amount.

René Jean then turned his thoughts on a Madame Desserre, cashier to the Cattle Receiver at La Villette, who took in considerable sums in cash every Monday and Thursday. He proposed the coup to Coquard, and the latter accepted. It was understood between them that the cashier would have to be stunned. Coquard gave a hammer to Georges Allard, who refused it saying he was too well known at La Villette, but he introduced two Algerians—Rasseloued and Malka—who accepted the job.

On the 18th October, René Jean and Georges Allard gave the hammer to Malka, who hid behind a pillar on the way Madame Desserre would have to take. René Jean hissed suddenly: "There she is." But at the moment the woman was about to pass Malka, he spoke again in a loud voice: "Let's go away." Several men who knew René Jean had just appeared. The coup had failed again.

This respite for the victim was not to be of long duration. The two Algerians refused to participate again in another attempt like that of the 18th, and René Jean, who had engaged to procure for Tissier the 60,000 francs which he should have paid for his hotel on the 15th October, resolved to act by himself and to compel Tissier to lend him assistance.

About 5 p.m. on the afternoon of the 21st October—that is to say at a time when the slaughter-houses are nearly empty—René Jean went to his *echaudoir*, and took a heavy hammer which he handed to Tissier; then both stood in the shadows awaiting their victim.

When she came, Tissier knocked her down with a violent blow. Both dragged the body away for some distance and Tissier, after striking again and again, seized the contents of the handbag. Both then fled hastily in different directions, having arranged a rendezvous for the next day at René Jean's address.

A few minutes later, two children who had been playing at hide-and-seek in a glass-paned gallery in the cattle market found the corpse of a woman who was at once identified. There could be no doubt that she had been struck ferociously about the head with a heavy instrument, because the ground and walls were splashed with blood and bits of brain.

At the hour that Madame Desserre was killed, Léon Allard was in a café in La Villette, boasting to his idle companions " of the work that his pals were doing in the market," a report of which could be read in the papers.

After the crime, René Jean judged it prudent to make a false alibi for himself in agreement with Tissier. The two agreed to state that at the hour of the murder they were together at the Porte-Saint-Martin. Tissier affirmed this in three successive declarations. He continued to the end of the trial to maintain that he was not at La Villette during the afternoon of the 21st. But in spite of everything René Jean was arrested. This astounded the wholesale butchery world. There was talk of a judicial error. Besides he persisted in denying his guilt, and defended himself with energy. It was by trying to over-prove his innocence that he failed.

He continued, with this object, to correspond with Tissier who, one day at the beginning of March 1921, sent to Bergue—who had lent the 60,000 francs—a letter in which René Jean asked this honest man to give false evidence.

This discovery forced him to some kind of confession, not only in the matter of the Desserre case, but also in relation to other crimes committed by the band.

Tissier, against whom the inquiry had already collected troublesome evidence, continued, despite the persistent avowals of his accomplice, to protest his innocence, as did Di Sema. The other prisoners, less compromised, confessed. Sarrazin thought it best to disappear, and has never been traced since.

On the 28th November 1922, the entire gang of La Villette, except Sarrazin, appeared before the Jury of the Seine.

As a result of what seemed to be a misunderstanding on the part of the jury about the questions put to them, Tissier and the absent Sarrazin were condemned to death, while René Jean escaped with a life sentence, and Di Sema also.

Coquard was sentenced to twenty years' hard labour; Georges Allard to ten, Léon Allard to ten years of imprisonment and seven years of *interdiction de séjours;* Saban to seven years; Macreau and Adam to five years; Desotot, Rasseloued, and Malka were acquitted.

After the judgment the jury recognized that they had made some error in their interpretation of the questions, and signed a petition asking for mercy for Tissier whom their verdict had condemned to death. A little later his sentence was changed to one of hard labour for life.

The Affair of Train 5

A little after midnight on the 25th July 1921, Express No. 5, which had left Paris at 7.55 p.m. on the 24th, was running at full speed through the country between Beaune and Chagny.

All the passengers, even those who had sat up late smoking and talking, had turned in. No other sound than that of the running of the train broke the silence of the night.

A young engineer stretched on the back couch of the front first-class compartment, feet towards the passage, felt himself suddenly shaken by the coat. When he opened his sleepy eyes he saw a strange apparition before him ; a short man in a black mask which fell to his chest, with two little holes cut in it for his eyes, and a jockey's cap with the peak pulled down over the forehead. The barrel of a revolver held in the left hand was pushing aside the shade over the central lamp, and in an imperative voice the man said : " Hands up ! Money ! Jewels ! "

The cold muzzle of the barrel convinced the young man that it was not part of a nightmare, and he complied, taking from his pocket 200 francs in notes and handing them over. The man then turned his revolver on the traveller sleeping on the other side of the compartment. This was the young man's father. Meanwhile a second man, also masked, appeared in the doorway, with a revolver in his right hand and a dagger in the left, covered the young man and kept him quiet.

The first bandit awakened the second traveller, and called out as before : " Your money. Jewels. You can't resist, there are five of us."

Awake and trembling, the man drew from the left pocket of his coat 2300 francs in notes, and gave them to the train-robber.

The man at the door then said impatiently : " The rings ! the rings ! "

The traveller, who wore three rings on the little finger of his left hand, did not obey. His son said to him in Spanish : " Give up your rings," and taking his father's hand, drew off the rings and handed them over to the bandit.

The latter retired backwards, his revolver always threatening them, and said before leaving : " If you pull the alarm signal you are dead men." But there was still another emotion for the two victims who had thought themselves freed from further aggression. The man with the dagger entered in his turn, approached the older man and, with a quick movement, snatched his gold watch and chain, and went out, closing the door behind him.

Demoralized by this unexpected hold-up, and fearing the return of the robbers, the two men did not dare to pull the signal, and remained quiet.

Continuing their round, the two men entered the next compartment, where they managed the travellers with the same ease, and after that a third—their arguments being conclusive.

At length they entered a compartment where two officers were sleeping, Captain Morel and Lieutenant Carabelli. Both awakened with a start, feeling the cold muzzles of the revolvers pressed against their foreheads. Seeing resistance was useless, Captain Morel obeyed and handed his notecase to his aggressor. It contained scarcely a 100 francs.

But Lieutenant Carabelli seized one of the bandits by the body, snatched his revolver from him and pressed it against the man's throat.

"Let him go," shouted the other who was standing by the door. The lieutenant did not obey. A report rang out and the unhappy young man, shot point-blank, crumpled up.

The two robbers then took to flight, and met at the end of the passage another of the band, who, also masked and armed, was guarding the connection with the next carriage. One of them pulled an alarm signal, whilst another opened a door of the train, which slowed up almost at once.

The three bandits then jumped out one after the other and disappeared into the night.

The police were warned as soon as possible, and found their tracks next morning. Three men answering to the description of the criminals, in a state of great fatigue and with very muddy boots, had been seen at seven o'clock on the morning after the crime at the Gare d'Etang. They had taken second-class tickets, and left in the direction of Nevers. They had not exchanged a single word amongst themselves. Two of them, after taking off their footgear, had gone to sleep, whilst the third seemed to keep watch. They had not been seen to get out at Nevers, however, and it was assumed they had slipped out on the far side, away from the platform.

It was ascertained later that the same persons had taken the 5 a.m. train from Nolay to Etang. Soon after, bits of pocket-books, three-parts burnt, were found at the foot of a wall on the outskirts of Nolay.

Research brought nothing to light for some days. After Nevers the trail was lost, but on the 28th July the Police were informed that a man known as André, a frequenter of bars in the Rue Cujas in Paris, had been boasting with a stranger in such a

way as to suggest that one or other of them knew something of the affair of "Train 5." These remarks had been overheard by very reliable witnesses who did not wish their identity to be made known.

The man usually addressed as André—known for his pretensions to elegance and for the grey gloves he was in the habit of wearing—had said: "If the detectives try to get us, we shan't receive them with pistols but with hand grenades."

Inquiry led to a rapid identification of the man with the grey gloves. His name was Cablanc. It was then established that the so-called Cablanc was in reality Jacques Mecislas Charrier, born on May 2nd 1895, in Paris. Calling himself a medical student, he had lived in the Rue Cujas at the Hotel Excelsior until July 5th.

The identity of the man with whom he had been talking, according to the witnesses, was also established. He was a certain Marcel Bréger, who passed as a sculptor.

Bréger had left the hotel in the Rue Cujas on the 27th of that month without leaving any address. A search made in the room which he had just given up led to the discovery of a letter addressed to a man named Dujardin. It was supposed that Bréger, or Charrier, sometimes employed the false name of Dujardin. There is a Police branch known as the "Service des Garnis," which occupies itself with the surveillance of hotels and lodging-houses. A search made under its direction at two o'clock one morning revealed the fact that a man named Dujardin had taken a room on July 5th—the day on which Charrier had left the hotel in the Rue Cujas—in another hotel in the Rue des Fosses, the Saint-Jacques. A photograph of Charrier—he was known in the Judicial Records as having already undergone four sentences—was at once shown to the proprietor of the hotel, who recognized it immediately, and said that his client was at that moment in his room.

A watch was set around the house. Dujardin, otherwise Charrier, came out at nine in the morning and was immediately arrested. He was found to be carrying a loaded automatic pistol and two full clips for recharging it. Also the sum of 275 francs.

Cleverly cross-examined, he avowed at once that he was one of the authors of the attack on "Train 5," and indicated as his accomplices Thomas and Bertrand, two habitual criminals well known to the Police.

His confession was as follows: "In May 1920, I made the acquaintance of Thomas and Bertrand in prison at Grenoble.

"As soon as I was released I went to visit Bertrand, who had

been liberated before me and who lived under the name of Bréger in a hotel in the Rue des Messageries. I knew his address because he had sent postal orders to me several times, a liberality he could afford, on account of a burglary committed by him in the Rue des Rives after he came out of prison, which brought him in more than a thousand francs.

" We decided to go to Marseilles, in order to burgle one of my former mistresses, Madame L.——.

" We arrived there on June 20th. I wrote at once to Mme L.—— to ask for a rendezvous. She fixed a meeting for the next day at 2 p.m., at the Place de la Préfecture. Whilst I talked with her, Bertrand and Thomas burgled her apartments, and robbed her of five hundred francs and some securities. We shared the money, kept the securities, and returned to Paris.

" I went back to live in the Rue Cujas, at the Hotel Excelsior, under the name of Caplan, but some days later the manager asked me for my papers of identity, and I left to go and live at 2 Rue Saint-Jacques, under the name of Dujardin.

" On Friday, July 23rd, the three of us, Bertrand, Thomas, and I met in a café, and on the proposal of Thomas, we agreed to attempt a grand coup in the Paris-Marseille Rapide, which would leave Paris next evening. Thomas settled all the details of the operation. He and Bertrand both had automatic pistols, and he gave me a ' Browning ' so that I might equally be armed.

" After we were agreed on all points, we went separately to the Railway Agency in the Rue Sainte-Anne, where we took first-class tickets as far as Lyons on that particular train.

" On Saturday the 24th, we met at the ' Taverne du Nègre,' 17 Boulevard Saint-Denis, about an hour before the departure of the train. We took apéritifs there, and then drove in a taxi to the Gare de Lyon. Arrived there, we took our reserved seats—I in the rear carriage, Thomas and Bertrand in the front first-class one.

" It had been agreed between us that the attack should be made between Dijon and Lyon, and that we should meet together for the last time in the buffet at Dijon.

" At Dijon I soon found the others, who only said: ' Get quickly into your compartment, and then come along and rejoin us by the corridor directly the train starts.'

" Immediately it was in motion I went forward to find the others. Bertrand supplied us with velvet masks which hung to the chest, and which he had bought in Paris—I don't know where. He then asked me to take up a post, revolver in hand, at the gangway between the two carriages. My orders were to

kill anyone who might try to come into the carriage where we were going to operate.

"I took up my position at once. No one came along during the coup, so I did not use my revolver. Bertrand and Thomas visited one after another of the occupied compartments, and made the travellers hand over their money and valuables. Once I thought I heard what might have been a shot, but I concluded it was a door that banged.

"A few minutes later, Bertrand and Thomas came back to look for me at the end of the corridor. Thomas pulled the alarm signal and said to me: 'Open the door, we are going to get out.' The train slowed up at once. We leapt out on to the ballast, and went off haphazard into the night, as none of us knew the district. As we were getting away from the railway line, Bertrand and Thomas told me what had happened, and said that in the last compartment they had visited Thomas had found a young lieutenant who, instead of obeying his summons, had fought, disarmed him, and seized him by the throat. Bertrand had then called to the officer to let Thomas go; but as the lieutenant paid no attention, he had had to kill him with a point-blank shot.

"None of the other travellers showed any fight.

"After having walked for some time through the night, we stopped to count our booty. There was, or that at least was what Thomas and Bertrand showed me, 4000 francs in bank-notes, a diamond ring, two other rings, and a gold watch.

"Then we arrived at a village which I have since learned was Nolay. Stopping near a wall, we divided the money. Thomas kept the jewellery to dispose of later.

"At this place we took another precaution. We tore up and burnt the five or six notecases taken off the passengers, their papers, and our masks. After that we went to the station, looked at the time-table, and at half-past five took the train to Etang.

"There, Thomas took three more tickets for Nevers. In that town, we entered the buffet to eat, and then left by the twelve o'clock train for Montargis, where we took tickets for Charenton. We were obliged to change at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, as our train did not stop at Charenton. On our arrival at 4.30 in the afternoon we ate in a café close to the station, and then, hailing a taxi, returned to Paris by the Porte de Bercy. I went alone to my house, 2 Rue des Fosses-Saint-Jacques."

Very depressed Charrier ended this confession by indicating the haunts where his accomplices might be found, and especially one in the Place des Ternes.

This was to be the cause of a new drama.

On July 30th at midnight, the Police Brigadier-Chef Didier, accompanied by Inspectors Curlier, Legrand, Vidal, and Maitre, went to the café indicated in the Place des Ternes, at the corner of the Avénue de Wagram and the Rue Saint-Honoré. On nearing this place they recognized Thomas and Bertrand seated at tables on the terrace, on the side of the Avénue de Wagram.

Whilst the Brigadier-Chef Didier and Inspectors Vidal and Maître remained near the entrances of the establishment, Inspectors Curlier and Legrand sat down on the terrace to be near the two men.

About 12.40 p.m. Thomas and Bertrand left the café and started to cross the Avénue de Wagram. Inspectors Curlier and Legrand were following them. Suddenly Thomas and Bertrand whipped about, plunged their right hands into their pockets, and pulled out each an automatic pistol. Inspectors Legrand and Vidal threw themselves at once on Thomas, whilst Inspector Curlier, joined almost immediately by Brigadier-Chef Didier and Inspector Maître, flung themselves on Bertrand.

A general struggle took place, in the course of which Thomas and Inspector Vidal fell. Thomas disengaged himself and opened fire on the Inspectors. Legrand replied and sent Thomas to the ground; whilst Bertrand, whom Inspector Curlier had upset, fired several shots at him, and then turned on Brigadier-Chef Didier.

Inspector Maître then finished Bertrand with another shot.

At the end of this scene, there were two men lying dead on the ground; Bertrand and Thomas, and one dying, Inspector Curlier. Neither Brigadier Didier nor Inspector Vidal, though fired at, had been hit.

It is recorded that, on searching the dead bandits, Bertrand was found to be in possession of two automatics with clips for loading and a dagger. Thomas had an automatic and a hunting-knife.

In spite of the care that was at once given him, Inspector Curlier, who had received four bullets in his body during the struggle and who, knowing himself to be mortally wounded, said to his chiefs when they reached his bedside: "I only did my duty," died at eleven o'clock that night.

The city of Paris gave him a striking public funeral.

Thomas and Bertrand being dead, only Mecislas Charrier remained to be dealt with by justice.

This bandit was rather a strange character. He was the natural son—not recognized by his father—of a Russian philoso-

pher, Mecislas Goldberg, author of a fairly well-known work, *The Letters of Alexis.* He had been brought up by an intellectual mother and till the age of 16 had received a suitable education. But he was idle and wayward and profited little by it. After having left his mother, he lived on what his mistress could earn. Convictions for swindling, blackmail, theft, attempts to get hold of money anyhow, soon began to fill his judicial dossier.

His pretensions to be a man of fashion led to his arrest.

His moustache cut à l'Americaine, and his suit of grey with gloves to match had been remarked in the Rue Cujas. When the so-called André was described, it was especially his grey gloves that led the Police Brigadier-Chef Mettefeu to identify him.

This bandit had also some literary pretensions, but the specimens of his verses that have been quoted are so poor that they seem less justifiable than his claims to elegance. These verses to his mistress are witness to his unbalanced mentality:

" Je me ris des douleurs
Comme on a rit des miennes.
Que m'importe la vie
Pourvu que je te tiennes ? "[1]

The inquiry established, in fact, that he had a fundamental natural ferocity, and that he ill-treated his mistresses.

In spite of his airs, he was just about on a moral level with Thomas, who was the prime mover in the affair of " Train 5 " and whose face eloquently revealed the mentality of the brute.

On the 28th April 1922, there was to be seen in the dock at the Assize Court, a big, long-haired man, of olive complexion, with black coat and trousers and a fancy waistcoat.

He had not forgetten a pair of pearl-grey gloves. A handkerchief of fine cambric overflowed negligently from his coat pocket, and plenty of cuff showed on his wrists. Plainly he was posing.

From the beginning of his examination, he changed the pose plastic for the pose moral. To the question of the President: " What is your name ? " he answered in a voice of meaning: " Bastard Mecislas Charrier."

Some moments later, like a bad actor and with very little accent of sincerity, he made a profession of anarchistic faith.

But when the quick of the affair was touched, he sought to

[1] " I laugh at griefs
As others laugh at mine.
What matters life to me
So long as I am thine ? "

profit by the death of his companions by throwing all the blame on them.

When the prosecution produced proof that he was the moving spirit of the band, he pretended that he had only acted under coercion, and played quite a secondary rôle.

His attitude at the second sitting was even more deplorable than at the first. He wore a pearl-grey suit, with a half-band at the back of his waist, and his hands again were gloved. He declaimed with many gestures his hatred of Society.

As the President expressed it: "His vanity made him pose and show off."

When the speeches and counter-speeches had been made, the President asked him if he had anything to say in his defence. He struck the edge of the prisoner's box with violence, and answered in a ringing voice: "I am neither mad nor unbalanced; I claim entire responsibility for my actions. A desperate enemy of Society, my hatred will only finish with my life. Gentlemen of the jury, I defy you to take my head."

No doubt he thought he had spoken well.

The jury, taking him at his word, replied to this challenge with a verdict of guilty on each charge, and the Court condemned him to death.

On the 2nd August 1922, the hour of expiation having struck, he was taken to the scaffold, before which his affected bearing fell away, and he cut a mean figure. It was a bit of human flotsam that was guillotined.

The Post Office Bandits of Cormeilles-en-Parisis

Turning over the pages of the voluminous Police Records before me in search of representative cases of French bandits of outstanding interest, I came across a case which, although not amongst the great crimes of France, yet deserves mention here, because it shows rather clearly how the bad example of a criminally powerful mind may lead others into the deep mire of criminality which, very often, leads eventually, if not to the guillotine, then to the Penal Settlements. Here is the story of a gang of youthful bandits who effected a particularly daring hold-up.

On the 20th March 1925, a little before three in the afternoon, a trio of youths entered the post office at Cormeilles-en-Parisis.

It happened at the moment to be empty. The three spoke in low voices, and seemed to be consulting, when a woman came into the office.

Then one of the three, a big youth who seemed to be between eighteen and twenty years of age, advanced towards the telephone clerk and asked to be put in communication with No. 72 Argenteuil.

He went into the telephone booth, whilst his companions stood by the cash-windows. A few moments later he came out, saying: "It is not 72. You have not given me number 72."

One of his companions then drew a revolver from his pocket: the speaker did the same, and facing a cash-window covered the two women employées on duty at the time, calling out: "Hands up!" The third member of the band took a short club from under his coat, and stationed himself, arm raised, near the door opening on the road.

Scared, the women at the wickets stiffened themselves. The two bandits with revolvers then opened the communicating door between the two offices and dashed inside. One of them continued to cover the women, whilst the other, going straight to the cash drawer, opened it and rifled its contents.

At this moment a postman named Porcherot, coming out of an inner room, found himself confronting the man who threatened the women and immediately attacked him. The bandit jumped aside and fired. The bullet missed its mark and the postman sprang at the man again, this time succeeding in throwing his arms round him.

A second shot rang out. The man who had rifled the cash drawer had fired point-blank at the postman, who crumpled up in a heap.

Abandoning his post at the door the third man rushed into the inner office, where he thought, doubtless, he was needed, and, savagely hitting the unfortunate postman on the head, finished him off.

The three bandits immediately took to flight.

The inquiry on this coup at once so bold and so savage disclosed that the actors in it had arrived in a light lorry, painted a reddish yellow colour (called in French "tango"), roofed with a black tarpaulin and carrying on the body the inscription in chalk: "Transports—Asnières." The car had halted before the post office, engine running, whilst its occupants went inside. This was the only clue.

The description of this light lorry, published by the Press, enabled the Police to obtain an important piece of information on 22nd March. The car had been seen on the eve of the outrage at Bois-Colombes, at the corner of the Rue des Bourguignons.

Some hours later a second piece of evidence made it certain

that the same vehicle had been seen before a small house in the Rue des Chambard, No. 29-bis, occupied by a woman named Pierson, a war widow, mother of a little girl and a boy of eighteen, a mechanic.

More precise information still was given a little later by a neighbour. The day after the hold-up, young Pierson had been seen covering the " tango " car with black paint.

The detectives who took up the trail actually found the identical light lorry in the yard of the small house inhabited by the Pierson family. It had been freshly painted black, but one could see under this its original colour, which was yellow tango.

Examining the vehicle more closely, it was discovered that on the body were still visible the words " Transports—Asnières."

They had indeed found the conveyance used by the criminals of Cormeilles-en-Parisis.

The description of young Pierson, owner of the light lorry in question, corresponded with that of one of the bandits of Cormeilles—the one who had entered the telephone booth.

Information obtained about him was decidedly unfavourable. He was a motor-mechanic, but worked very little at his trade.

The Police set an organized watch about the house in the hope of arresting him, but without success.

The woman Pierson was then questioned. She declared that her son was really the owner of the lorry, which carried the number 18-63-G.4, and on which he had written with his own hand the words : " Transports—Asnières." Further she informed the inquirers that his greatest friends were a certain Lucien Bierre and a René Vannier.

On Friday at 1 p.m. Bierre came to look for her son. Both left in the lorry which they kept out until the end of the afternoon. On Saturday morning, Marcel Pierson began to repaint the lorry black. Then he had stopped, although the job was nearly finished, and had packed up and abruptly left his mother, saying he was going to Calvados to see his fiancée's grandmother.

Neither Bierre nor Vannier was found at home ; they had also thought it advisable to travel.

The Police hunted for them feverishly for the next few days without success. Then on the 24th March a girl, Juliette Robaud, known as " Juiu," Pierson's mistress, came and gave herself up at the Asnières police station, and stated that the three persons for whom search was being made had left on the 22nd for Marseilles in her company. They had stopped at an hotel near the Gare Saint-Charles, but next day, on learning that they were " wanted " for the crime at Cormeilles-en-Parisis, Pierson had

decided to go back to Paris, whilst Vannier and Bierre had preferred to remain at Marseilles. She had come back with Pierson, who had left her at the Gare de Lyon, saying he was going to commit suicide.

The same day, the fact that Vannier and Bierre were at Marseilles was wired to the Police there. A witness had recognized them and had overheard one say to the other, in a café, pointing out a part of a newspaper that related to the Cormeilles affair: "You see? The names are given."

This witness had warned the Police, but by the time the latter arrived their quarry had disappeared.

Both were arrested next day by cyclist police on the terrace of a café in the Rue Saint-Bazile. They took to flight on seeing the Police approaching them, but were caught after a chase of a few hundred yards.

Taken back to Paris, both threw the responsibility of the crime on Pierson, who had been the instigator of it, and had shot the postman. Bierre acknowledged having fired, but only in the air, to frighten the postman who had leapt on him. Vannier pretended to have done no more than to keep watch.

The principal actor in the drama could not hope much longer to escape. On the 5th April his presence was signalled from Brussels, and on the 6th he was arrested in a furnished room in the Rue Fontaine, where he was staying under the name of Titrant. He had, in fact, in his possession a certificate of birth carrying this name. He used it at first to refute the Police charge, but soon convinced of the futility of his ruse, he confessed his identity, his participation in the attack on the post office, and even the fact of having instigated it.

The coup had been premeditated and decided on for the afternoon of the 19th at a dance-hall called "La Cabane" in the Avenue de Paris at Genevilliers, where Bierre and he had met together. Pierson, owner of the light lorry, bought by him for transport purposes, had proposed, in a joking way, to hold up a bank.

Bierre had thrown cold water on this, and said it would be much better to hold up a post office. Pierson had then proposed the one at Pontoise. But Bierre had preferred Cormeilles. They fell into line and arranged a meeting for next day at one o'clock. Bierre promised to rope in Vannier, who he was certain would join them willingly.

At the time the expedition was to start, Vannier, failing perhaps in his resolution at the last minute and having met two girls whom he knew, proposed to Pierson to go just for a run

and put off the hold-up for another day. A quiet but decisive intervention on the part of Bierre caused Pierson to make up his mind. The former said: "I haven't a single sou. We must go." So they started for Cormeilles.

Pierson confessed all the facts, except with regard to the death of the postman. He said he killed him unintentionally by pulling the trigger of his revolver without taking aim as he was emptying the cash drawer.

The booty had been shared out at his house. Each received 740 francs. They had burned two Défense Nationale bonds which they had carried off by accident.

Pierson said he had been tempted to commit suicide, as he had told his mistress, by throwing himself out of the train on the way back from Marseilles, but confessed he had not the courage.

On his return to Paris, he had lived at various hotels, then on the 2nd April he went to Lille and thence to Tourcoing and Roubaix.

The end of his Odyssey is curious, in the sense that it shows that individuals of the same type as Bonnot and his mates—even though they may not equal their predecessors—are always present, lurking in the shadow, ready to profit by circumstances or to help greater criminals in the name of the principles of Anarchy.

In fine, wandering and pursued, Pierson met in the course of his flight several anarchists who, knowing of his crime, helped him into Belgium, at first by serving as guides and then by getting him across the Belgian frontier on foot by means of a café with two entrances, one on either side of the border, and finally by obtaining false papers in the name of Titrant, to make it possible for him to remain in Belgium.

The case came on at the end of November 1925, before the Assizes at Versailles. The three accused showed such bravado at their trial that Pierson and Bierre were, despite their youth, condemned to death.

A commutation was sanctioned later to these young blackguards, who escaped the guillotine to join their mate Vannier, who had been given a life sentence.