

Literature, &c.

From the London Court Journal.

LADY GUILFORT.

A work has recently been published in Paris, entitled 'Anecdotes of the French Police,' by M. Peuchet, keeper of the archives of the police of Paris. Some of the statements it contains are among the most extraordinary we ever read. We have been particularly struck by the adventures of a murderous female who assumed the name of Lady Guilfort; and, availing ourselves of an able digest given in the Monthly Chronicle, we hasten to lay a part of her strange story before our readers.

It was during the reign of Louis XIV. that disappearances of Individuals became alarmingly frequent in Paris. Awfully mysterious rumours on the subject were rife; and the lieutenant general of the police, anxious to unravel the awful secret, employed an intelligent agent of the name of Lecoq for that purpose. It transpired that a female, who sometimes pretended to be a Polish princess, a mademoiselle Jaborowski, and at others assumed the title of Lady Guilfort, was at the bottom of all.—Lecoq placed his son, superbly dressed, in her way. The female appeared, and he was allured to her house, where many had been drawn who were seen no more. He entered: the charms of the sorceress made him for a moment forget the part he had to act, and he gazed on her with the most fervent admiration. While in this situation, the "elder Lecoq, who with the police agents were impatiently waiting in the street, not hearing the signal agreed upon with his son, put a whistle to his mouth, and blew it loudly. The shrill sound reached the ears of young Lecoq, and put his illusions instantly to flight. He started from his seat, and the syren, under whose spell he had been, under pretence of giving instruction to her old suitor, went into an adjoining chamber. L'Eveille, profiting by her absence, made an inspection of the room, in one corner of which stood what appeared to be a kind of Indian screen. Wishing to see what was behind this, he endeavored to close up its folds, but finding them immovable he shook them with some violence, when he heard a click, like that of a spring giving way, and one of the folds descended into the floor, and left unmasked a deep and ample recess or cupboard, upon the shelves of which were ranged twenty-six silver dishes, and in each a human head, the flesh of which had been preserved by some embalming process. A stifled cry of horror burst from the youth's lips, which but a moment before had been breathing the accents of admiration and passion. But his agony of terror was still further increased when, looking towards one of the windows of the room, he thought he saw several other cadaverous faces fixing upon him through the panes their glazed but fiery glances. He grasped at the back of a chair, to keep him from falling, his hair stood on end, drops of cold perspiration covered his forehead, his cheeks became paler and more livid than the faces of the dead that confronted him, and his nerves at length giving way, he sunk upon his knees, and clasped his hands in a delirium of terror and despair.

"At this moment the window was burst in, and his father, followed by the police agents, jumped into the apartment; for the elder Lecoq, alarmed by the silence of his son, and dreading that he might be assassinated, had bravely mounted to the assault of the house, which he was enabled to do by means of ladders, which the agents procured from a neighbouring house-builder's yard. This fortunate and daring act of Lecoq's did, in fact save his son's life, for immediately after the noise made by Lecoq and the police agents breaking into the apartment, Mademoiselle Jaborowski, followed by four armed ruffians, rushed from the adjoining chamber, but the police agents being superior in number, and equally well armed, resistance was in vain, and the fair murderess and her four accomplices were secured, and after being manacled, were carried off to prison. A close examination of the house led to no other discovery worth noticing.

"The explanation of this strange scene given by Peuchet is as follows:

"A number of the most desperate malefactors, who crimes had often merited the gibbet and the galleys, had formed an association under the command of an experienced and daring chief. This arch villain had, in the course of his wanderings, fallen in with a rich but most profligate Englishwoman—a modern Messalina. Besides being his mistress, she lent herself to serve as a decoy, by means of which young men who had the appearance of wealth were lured to the den where young Lecoq had had so miraculous an escape. There, after sharing in her entertainments, they were murdered, and their heads severed from the bodies. The latter were disposed of to the surgical students for anatomical purposes; and the heads, after being dried and embalmed, and kept until a safe opportunity offered of sending them to Germany, where a price was given for them by the secret amateurs of a science then its infancy, but has since made some noise in the world under the name of phrenology, or the system of Gall and Spurzheim. The government, dreading the effect on the minds of the people likely to be produced by a public exposure of these numerous and atrocious murders, took measures for the prompt but secret punishment of the culprits. The four robbers were hanged, and their female accomplice was also sentenced to death; but destiny ordained otherwise, as the sequel will prove.

"The conclusion of this strange eventful history is thus narrated by Peuchet.—

"The Chevalier de Lorraine, the Marquis de Louvois, and the Chancellor of France happened to be present in the Marchioness de

Montespan's apartment, whilst Louis XIV. was relating to her and the Duke of Orleans, his brother, the adventure of young Lecoq, who had been rewarded with a considerable sum of money and a lucrative place. The marchioness expressed great horror at the profligacy and cruelty of Lady Guilfort, (which title, like that of Joborowski, was one of the many names assumed by the Englishwoman, her real name having never been discovered,) and asked the king if the execution of so base and fiendish a creature should soon take place? Louis replied, that the law would take its course, and then changed the conversation. Soon after the Duke of Orleans and the Chevalier de Lorraine took their leave. After quitting the apartment the Chevalier said to his Royal Highness, 'This Englishwoman must be a rare piece of womanhood (une maîtresse femme) suppose we have her to sup with us.' The prince cried out, 'Shame! Shame!' But the very extravagance of the proposal pleased him; and on the favourite renewing his entreaties he consented. The Englishwoman being confined in the bastille, a blank lettre de cachet was procured, and filled up with an order to the governor to deliver to the care of the bearer Lady Guilfort for the purpose of her being transferred to the prison of Pignerol. The governor of the Bastille, deceived by this false warrant, delivered up his prisoner; but shortly after having done so, he came to the knowledge of the trick that had been played on him, and in the first moment of alarm and anger he talked of complaining to the king; but on the name of the Duke of Orleans being mentioned, he resolved to hush up the matter, which was done by means of a process verbal certifying the sudden death and burial within the precincts of the Bastille of the female prisoner in question.

"Lady Guilfort, who supposed that her removal from the Bastille was only for the purpose of being taken to the Concoiergerie, preparatory to her execution, soon perceived, however, that the carriage took the direction of one of the barriers of Paris; after quitting which, and at the end of two hours' drive it stopped. A kind of equerry came and opened the door offered her his hand to descend, & after passing through a long corridor, and up some flights of stairs, ushered her into a brilliant and well lighted apartment. A well-heaped fire of logs was blazing in the chimney, and nothing about the room wore the appearance of a prison. After the interval of a few minutes three gentlemen entered the room. Though plainly dressed, it was evident, from their air and manner, that they were persons of high rank. One of them immediately on entering, put an opera-glass to his eye, and examined with haughty curiosity Lady Guilfort; the two others threw themselves into arm-chairs. Lady Guilfort, after the first surprise was over had no difficulty in recognising in the persons before her, the King's brother, the Duke of Orleans, the Chevalier de Lorraine, and the Marquis d'Effiat. She quickly perceived the motives which led to her being brought into their presence; and though, under other circumstances, she would have willingly joined in the wildest orgies with the persons in whose company she then found herself, yet the recollection of her dungeoning in the Bastille, and the terrible death impending over her, left her no thought but that of making her escape. She affected not to be aware of the rank of the persons before her; but seeming to enter into the spirit of the adventure, she exerted all her powers of fascination, and soon made captive to her seductive influence the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat. But the Duke of Orleans, never a great admirer of the fair sex, and who could not vanquish his horror of the Englishwoman, tired before long of the scene; and bethinking himself that the gratification of his curiosity might be too dearly purchased by the risk of the king's displeasure, should the circumstance meet his majesty's ears, he proposed to have her conveyed back to the Bastille. His companions, however, made him sensible of the want of generosity in such a proceeding, and it was agreed that the Lady Guilfort should be sent off in the direction of Brussels or England, at her option. The Duke of Orleans, having refused to stay for supper, was conducted by the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat to his apartments; for this scene took place in the palace of Versailles, and in the lodgings of the Marquis de Lafare, the use of which he had given to the Chevalier de Lorraine for twenty-four hours.

"After returning to the room where Lady Guilfort was, all three sat down to a petit souper. The most exuberant gaiety and not the most refined gallantry was the order of the night. At the close of a supper which had been prolonged to the small hours of the morning, Lady Guilfort on a sudden rose up, and taking up a taper, made her lowest courtesy, and wished the gentlemen good night. The marquis and the chevalier likewise quitted the table, and their frail guest, before she left the room, contrived to tell each, without the other hearing, that she would leave the door of her chamber open. She then quitted the room. Soon after the two gentlemen moved off as if to their respective chambers; but, after leaving in their rooms their lighted tapers, they stole back in the dark on tiptoe, and met face to face at the door of the lady's chamber. Seeing the trick put upon them they burst out a laughing and both entered the chamber to reproach her with her duplicity; but they had scarcely advanced three paces into the room, when Lady Guilfort, who had been concealed in the corridor, pulled the door too, locked it, put the key in her pocket, and hurried back to the supper-room, where, tying together the table-cloths and napkins, she fastened one end of this impromptu rope to the balcony, and by means of it, let herself down into the park,

where she lay concealed until the gates were opened in the morning. She then slipped out, and hurrying into the town of Versailles, took the first vehicle that offered, and arrived in Paris before her two imprisoned admirers were released from durance; as they dared not during the night make a noise in the palace by calling or ringing for the servants, to have the door of the room in which they were locked up forced open, lest it might lead to the discovery of their participation in the criminal trick played off upon the governor of the Bastille, and the consequent escape of Lady Guilfort."

A MAN OVERBOARD.

[The following thrilling sketch was written by a correspondent of the New York Tribune:]

"In the moment that most terrific of all cries at sea, 'A man overboard! a man overboard!' flew like lightning over the ship. I sprung upon the quarter deck just as the poor fellow, with his 'fearful human face,' riding the top of the billow, fled past. In an instant all was commotion; planks were cast over for him to seize and sustain himself on, until the ship could be put about, and the boat lowered.

"The first mate, a bold, fiery fellow, leaped into the boat that hung at the side of the quarter deck, and in a voice so sharp and stern, I seem to hear it yet, shouted, 'In men—in men!' But the poor sailors hung back—the sea was too wild. The second mate then sprung to the side of the first, and the men, ashamed to have both their officers alone, followed 'Cut away the lashings,' exclaimed the officer—the knife glanced around the ropes—the boat fell to the water—rose on the high wave far above the deck, and drifted rapidly astern. I thought it could not live a moment in such a sea, but the officer who held the helm was a skillful seaman. Twice in his life he had been wrecked, and for a moment I forgot the danger, in admiration of his self-possession.

He stood erect—the helm in his hand; his flashing eye embracing the whole peril in a single view, and his hand bringing the head of the gallant little boat on to each high sea that otherwise would have sunk her. I watched them till nearly two miles astern. I saw them lie too and look around for the lost sailor. Just then I turned my eye to the horizon, and saw a squall, blacker and heavier than any we had before encountered, rushing down upon us. The captain also saw; and was terribly excited. He afterwards told me that in all his sea life he had never been more so. He called for a flag, and springing into the shrouds, waved it for their return. The gallant fellows obeyed the signal, and pulled for the ship. But it was slow work, for the head of the boat had to be laid on to almost every wave. It was now getting dark; and if the squall should strike the boat before it reached the vessel, no one expected ever to see it again. It would either go down at once, or drift away into the surrounding darkness, to struggle out the night as it could. I shall never forget the scene. All along the southern horizon between the black water and the heavens, was a white streak of tossing foam.

Nearer and clearer every moment it boiled and roared on its track. Between it and us appeared at intervals that little boat, like a black speck on the crest of the billows, and then sunk away, apparently engulfed forever. One moment the squall would seem to gain on them beyond the power of escape, and then delay its progress. As I stood and watched them both, and yet could not tell which would reach us first, the excitement amounted to a perfect agony. Seconds seemed lengthened into hours. I could not look steadily on that gallant little crew, now settling the question of life and death to themselves and perhaps to us, who would be left almost unmanned in the middle of the Atlantic, and encompassed by a storm. The sea was making fast, and yet that frail thing rode it like a duck. Sometimes she sank away for a longer time than usual, and I thought it all over, and would cover my eyes in horror—the next moment she would appear between us and the black rolling cloud, literally covered with foam and spray. The captain knew, as he said afterwards, that a few more minutes would decide the fate of his officers and crew. He called for his trumpeter, and springing up the ratlings, shouted out over the roar of the blast and the waves, 'Pull away, my brave ones, the squall is coming—away my hearties!' and the bold fellows did 'give way,' with a will. I could see their oars quiver as they rose from the water, and the life-boat sprung to their strokes down the billows like a phantom on the leap. On she came, and on came the blast.—Oh! how my heart leaped as she shot around the stern, and rose on a wave far over our lee quarter, shaking the water from her head as if in delight to find her sheltered again.

The chains were fastened, and I never pulled with such right good will on a rope as on the one that brought the boat up to the vessel's side. As the heads of the crew appeared over the bulwarks, I could have hugged the brave fellows in transport. As they stepped on deck not a question was asked—no report given—but 'Forward, men,' broke from the Captain's lips. The vessel was trimmed to meet the blast, and we were again bounding on our way. If that squall had pursued the course of the former ones, we must have lost our crew; but when nearest the boat, (and it seemed to me the foam was breaking not a hundred yards off,) the wind suddenly veered and held the cloud in check, so that it swung round closely to our bows.

The poor sailor was gone; he came no back again.—It was his birth day—25 years old—and also his death day. Whether, a bold

swimmer, he saw at a distance his companions hunting hopelessly for him, and finally, with his heart growing cold in despair, beheld them turn back to the ship, and the ship itself toss its spars away from him forever, or whether the sea soon took him under, we know not. We saw him no more—and a gloom fell on the whole ship. There were but few in all of us on board, and we felt his loss. It was wild and dark night. Death had been among us, and left us with sad and serious hearts. That night as I walked to the stern, and looked back on the foam and tumult of the vessel's wake, in which the poor sailor had disappeared, I instinctively murmured—

"Oh! sailor boy, sailor boy, never again Shall love, friend, or kindred thy wishes repay; Far, far from thy home, down deep in the main, Full many a score fathom, thy frame shall decay. Days, weeks, months and ages, shall circle away, But still the vast waters above thee shall roll; Earth loses thy pattern for ever and aye. O! sailor boy, sailor boy, peace to thy soul!"

MANNERS.

[We take the following extract from a Lecture, recently delivered by Mr. Emerson, in New York.]

THERE exists a strict relation between the class of power, and the exclusive and polished circles. The last are always filled or filling from the first. The strong men usually give some allowance even to the petulances of fashion, for that affinity they find in it. Napoleon, child of the revolution, destroyer of the old noblesse, never ceased to court the Faubourg St. Germain: doubtless with the feeling, that fashion is a homage to men of his stamp. Fashion, though in a strange way, represents all manly virtue. It is virtue gone to seed: it is a hall of the Past. It usually sets its face against the great of this hour. Great men are not commonly in its halls: they are absent in the field; they are working, not triumphing. Fashion is made up of their children; of those who, through the value and virtue of somebody, have acquired lustre to their name, marks of distinction, means of cultivation, and generosity, and, in their physical organization, a certain health and excellence, which secure to them, if not the highest power to word, yet high power to enjoy. The class of power, the working heroes, the Cortez, the Nelson, the Napoleon, see that this is the festivity and permanent celebration of such as they; that fashion is funded talent; is Mexico, Marengo, and Trafalgar beaten out thin; that the brilliant names of fashion run back to just such busy names as their own, fifty or sixty years ago. They are the sowers, their sons shall be the reapers, and their sons, in the ordinary course of things, must yield the possession of the harvest to new competitors with keener eyes and stronger frames. The city is recruited from the country. In the year 1895, it is said, every legitimate monarch in Europe was imbecile. The city would have died out, rotted, and exploded, long ago, but that it was reinforced from the fields. It is only country which came to town day before yesterday, that is city and court-to-day.

Aristocracy and fashion are certain inevitable results. These mutual selections are indestructible. If they provoke anger in the least favored class, and the excluded majority revenge themselves on the excluding minority by the strong hand, and kill them, at once a new class finds itself at the top, as certainly as cream rises in a bowl of milk: and if the people should destroy class after class, until two men only were left, one of these would be the leader, and would be involuntary served, and copied by the other.—You may keep this minority out of sight and out of mind, but it is tenacious of life, and is one of the estates of the realm. I am the more struck with its tenacity, when I see its work. It respects the administration of such unimportant matters, that we should not look for any durability in its rule. We sometimes meet men under some strong moral influence, as a patriotic, a literary, a religious movement, and feel that the moral sentiment rules man and nature. We think all other distinctions and ties will be slight and fugitive, this of caste or fashion, for example; yet come from year to year, and see how permanent that is, in this Boston or New York life of man, where too, it has not the least countenance from the law of the land. Not in Egypt or in India a firmer or more impassible line. Here are associations whose ties goes over and under, and through it, a meeting of merchants, a military corps, a college class, a fire club, a professional association, a political, and religious convention;—the persons seem to draw inseparably near; yet, that assembly once disappeared, its members will not in the year meet again. Each returns to his degree in the scale of good society, porcelain remains porcelain, and earthen earthen. The objects of fashion may be frivolous, or fashion may be objectless, but the nature of this union and selection can be neither frivolous nor accidental. Each man's rank in that perfect gradation depends on some symmetry in his structure, or some agreement in his structure to the symmetry of society. Its doors unbarring instantaneously to a natural claim of their own kind. A natural gentleman finds his way in, and will keep the old patrician out, who has lost his intrinsic rank. Fashion understands itself; good-breeding and personal superiority of whatever country, readily fraternize with those of every other. The chiefs of savage tribes have distinguished themselves in London and Paris, by the purity of their taurine.