

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1896.

A SOUTH SEA ROMANCE.

FIGHT FOR A PARDON OF BROTHERS CONVICTED OF PIRACY.

Leonce and Eugene de Grave Found Guilty of Seven Murders on a Vessel in the South Pacific—Efforts in France and Belgium to Free Them.

A French prison has held for nearly four years two brothers who are either pirates and murderers of the most desperate type, or else innocent men who have been the victims of an astonishing chain of circumstances. A strong petition has just been presented to President Faure by many prominent Belgian Government officials asking for their release, and it marks the latest step in the long and unremitting fight for their pardon, which commenced with their conviction. The career of these two brothers, opening with the deeds of brilliant seamanship and closing with alleged piracy and among the islands of the South Pacific, makes a romance.

The brothers, Leonce and Eugene de Grave, were first sentenced to death by the Maritime Tribunal of Brest as guilty of the murder of seven men, but the De Grave family is powerful among the Belgian and French bourgeoisie, and the pressure was so great that the original sentence was changed to life imprisonment. Of the brothers' crime, if the testimony of one man is to be believed, there can be little doubt. But that man has been shown to have been a dissolute maritime vagabond of the South Pacific.

Leonce de Grave was born at Ostend in 1854. He enlisted in the Belgian army, and during his term of service and afterwards, while acting as pilot at Antwerp, saved several people from drowning at the risk of his own life, for which exploits he received medals from the King of Belgium. At thirty-one years of age, while he was in command of an English steamer, whose port of entry was Ostend, he rescued on three separate occasions, with great daring, the crews of three wrecked ships in mid-ocean, and for doing so he and his brother received the Belgian order of the Grand Cross.

In January, 1890, the events leading up to the South Sea drama began. Leonce and his younger brother went to London in search of berth, as the steamer they had commanded had been buried at sea. The brothers spoke English, French, and German equally well; so they had little trouble in securing the certificates of two English sailors—Alexander and Joseph Rorick—Leonce passing himself off for Alexander and Eugene as Joseph. This was necessary, it is claimed, as there was a strong feeling against foreign sailors in England at that time and masters and owners were refusing to employ seamen who were not members of the English Maritime Union. It was under these assumed names that the brothers passed through all their South Sea experiences and were condemned for murder and piracy. As British subjects they shipped on board the steamer Umlazi, bound for Natal, South Africa. From Natal they went to Australia, thence to the Island of Penrhyn, where they engaged in pearl fishing, becoming expert divers. At Raratonga, the largest of the Cook I lands, they set up as tropical merchants. Their business grew to large proportions, and they amassed considerable wealth. Leonce, known as Alexander Rorick, established himself on the Island of Kankura, while Eugene settled in Tahiti.

Into the harbor of Kankura one sunny morning sailed the Kanaka schooner Ninorahiti. Eugene de Grave was on board. Tired of commerce with savages, he had returned to his old love—the open sea. Gibson, the owner of the little schooner, the son of a Yankee father and a Kanaka mother, made him the Ninorahiti's first mate, acting captain. The Captain in title was a Kanaka named Tehae. Leonce received his brother with joy and readily agreed to Gibson's proposal that he should sail on the Ninorahiti as a passenger on her voyage among the islands.

When the schooner left Kankura the crew and passengers consisted of Tehae, the Captain; Gibson, the owner; Mirey, the cook; the De Graves, a Kanaka journeying to Tahiti, and four sailors. Ten men in all started on the voyage. Only three were left when it ended. These three told two different stories at the trial. Mirey, the cook, related a tale of murder, of piracy on the high seas, while the De Graves set up as their defence a story of strange coincidence. Mirey's narrative is by far the more dramatic.

It was on the evening of Jan. 6, 1892, he said, and the Ninorahiti was tacking between the islands of Makemo and Morutea. Eugene had the watch between 8 and midnight. His brother remained beside him on the deck talking earnestly. Gibson had gone below to sleep. Tehae had curled himself up on the deck, Mirey and Gibson, who were in their cabins, were suddenly awakened by two revolver shots. Gibson sprang up, ordering Mirey to remain below while he went on deck to see

what the trouble was. Leonce de Grave called to him:

'There is nothing the matter, but I would like to see you on deck directly.'

As Gibson came up Leonce shot him dead. A moment later, when Mirey raised his head above the hatchway, he felt the cold steel of a pistol barrel held by Eugene touching his temple.

'Remain below. If you come up I will kill you,' Eugene said.

The cook almost fell down stairs in his efforts to escape. Up on deck, while the vessel ploughed her way through the moonlit sea, the two brothers threw overboard the bodies of Gibson and the South Sea Captain, at whom the first two shots had been fired. Then they washed the blood from the deck, keeping at the same time the crew well forward.

What was the moving cause of these crimes and those that followed, according to Mirey's story, will never be made known. It could hardly have been greed of gain, for the brothers had already accumulated a large fortune in pearls and gold. If Mirey's account is true, it must rather have been some innate savagery in these men, transmitted, perhaps, from some long dead ancestor.

From that time forward the brothers ruled by terror, keeping their vigils with cocked revolvers in their hands. The day following the tragedy one of the sailors came on deck with the news that the Kanaka passenger was ill. At once Leonce sent him a bowl of water, into which he had stirred a white powder, which he gravely said, was an emetic. An hour after taking this the passenger died in great agony, and his body, after Leonce had read a brief funeral service over it, was cast into the sea.

All was quiet then for five days when, of a sudden, a new act in the drama was evolved. Leonce de Grave sent the cook, Mirey, to his cabin for a bottle of rum, and ordered him to give each of the sailors a drink. The helmsmen drained a glass without hesitation, but when the liquor was offered to the other sailors, who were standing in a knot forward, two of the three shook their heads; the third raised the bottle to his lips and drank deeply, despite the fact that his comrades tried to prevent him with frightened words that there was death within. An hour later the two men who had drunk the liquor fell dead upon the deck. To their companions Leonce said lightly that the men had succumbed to a contagious malady, quick and terrible in its effects. He then threw the bodies into the sea.

But one more act of the drama was to be played. Its time was a week later. Mirey was sent to the cabin for a bottle of beer and the two remaining sailors were ordered out on the bowsprit to take in sail. While they were there (Mirey says that he heard this through a porthole), Eugene walked toward them, brandishing his revolver and crying:

'If you don't work faster I'll shoot you.' In the extremity of fear the seamen threw themselves into the water, and the schooner swept by without an attempt being made to rescue them.

Tahiti was now near at hand, but to make that port was impracticable. In the first place there was no crew, and it was not to be supposed that the authorities would overlook this fact or believe that the disappearance of seven men was due simply to natural causes. Besides, no ship's papers could be found. Mirey claimed that Tehae always carried them on his person and that they went overboard with him. Two tasks presented themselves at once—to recruit new men and to forge new papers. Both these were done cleverly, and if it had not been for Mirey it is possible that all might have gone well and that the De Graves might have gone free with the ship which they are said to have pirated in the Southern Archipelago.

Dribbling about week after week among the islands of the south, touching at small and unknown places, they picked up three sailors and finally made Ponape, one of the Caroline islands, about 500 miles from Tahiti, with a new set of ship's documents in which the Ninorahiti appeared as the Poi, with Leonce as Capt. Georges Vernier and his brother as Mate Louis Toussaint.

At Ponape, Mirey made his way to the Spanish representative and told his story. The Poi was immediately seized and the De Graves arrested. Their newly assumed names of Vernier and Toussaint were found to be false, and they were set down in the charge of piracy and murder as Rorique, a Gallicizing of Rorick. They had altered the name of Rorick some months before in order to facilitate their mercurial operations. Directly the news of their arrest reached Europe a demand was made by France for extradition, and Spain promptly gave them up.

The trial came off at Brest before the Maritime Tribunal, and the brothers were defended by able counsel. Expecting to be acquitted, they did not declare their true names, but stood trial under the alias of Rorique. Had they made known their real names, doubtless they would have availed greatly in their defense.

The story they told in rebuttal of Mirey's testimony was either the cleverest sort of fabrication or the most amazing chain of events. It was a dramatic story of

sudden mutiny so fierce that it had to be suppressed at the pistol's muzzle. The revolt, they said, was headed by Tehae, the Captain, jealous because he was superseded, and because he dreaded returning to Tahiti on account of some former misdemeanors, which he feared he would have to answer for there. Leonce de Grave was standing on the quarter deck talking with Gibson when Tehae appeared yelling for the crew to come to prayers. Eugene was in his cabin, ill with fever. Leonce asked Tehae to make less noise and Gibson went below to his cabin. The schooner's course became unsteady. She was in a shallow and perilously narrow channel. De Grave found the helmsman asleep at his post. He struck him twice sharply, and at the man's outcry the sailors rushed forward. Tehae at their head, pistol in hand, Leonce de Grave fired twice in the air, thinking to frighten the mutineers, but Tehae shot twice at him and then threw himself overboard and swam to the nearest island.

Hardly had the second report sounded when Gibson came hastily on deck. With the crew all off duty and no one at the helm, the vessel was pitching high and low; there was a sudden lurch and the owner went overboard to his death. The mutiny had failed, and the crew's one idea was to get off the ship, lest they be imprisoned when Tahiti was reached. As the vessel faded among the islands during the next few hours the Kanakas, one by one slid into the sea and swam ashore. To cap the climax, that night the merchant passenger died.

Overcome with doubts and fears, the De Graves did not dare to make Tahiti. There was little chance of their story being believed and it seemed better to them to ship a new crew and to sail to a far distant island port under new names. The result of this judgment has already been detailed.

The principal factor in the case has been the cook Mirey, and it is almost entirely upon new evidence as to his character that the relatives and friends of the De Graves have been making their strenuous efforts to obtain a pardon. To say the least, Mirey is of very bad repute. He is a jailbird of standing, having served two terms in prison, the first one of six months for receiving stolen goods, the second one of a year and a day for the same. In addition he is suspected of murder in Tahiti, and it is known that he abandoned his wife, leaving her in pawn to a Chinaman on that island.

Since the trial a curious piece of evidence has come to light. At Manila, in the Philippine Islands, where Mirey was held in prison as a hostage, he asked two of his fellow prisoners what would be the penalty if he retracted his accusation against the De Graves, and if the French authorities could punish him for perjury. He also asked, these men swore, how much he could receive a day if he should be what is called in England a witness for the Crown, and he hoped to receive at least 20 francs. Again he said that he had made his accusations because the brothers had treated him cruelly, and it he had known that they would be imprisoned and have to pay so heavily for his vengeance, he would have said nothing.

GLEANINGS FROM AFRICA.

A Few notes by Recent Travellers, Humorous and Otherwise.

In a Mohammedan town near the west coast of Africa it was recently desired to enslave the inhabitants for the purpose of imposing a head tax. The natives were very much opposed to being counted, but the enumeration was easily made by the use of bringing a brass band from a neighbouring post. All the men, women, and children flocked to hear the music, and while they were giving rapt attention, the counting went on.

Somebody has probably been libelling Liberia; at any rate a traveller who wastes no compliments on that republic recites what purports to be an accident in one of the courts of justice there. He says the judge had just given a decision against a litigant when that worthy suddenly remarked as he pulled a revolver:

'I guess and calculate, Mr. Judge, that unless you change your mind I will send one of these bullets through you,' whereupon the decision was promptly reversed.

One of the latest achievements in school compositions is that of a little English boy who, writing about Africa, described it as 'a great country, full of sand and Elephants a large part of which was uninhabited until that wicked man Stanley filled it with towns and villages.'

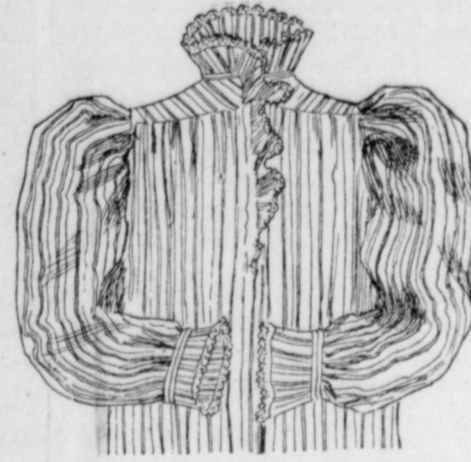
Mr. C. H. Robinson says that English shillings are current along the lower Niger, but many of the natives will not accept a coin that ante-dates the present reign. A shilling stamped with the profile of George IV. was recently returned with the remark, 'Queen Victoria, he be King now.'

The same writer says that some native students at the lower Niger mission stations are studying the English language with ludicrous results. They use the dictionary without much discrimination. One of them, apologizing to a white man for not coming to see him, wrote, 'Had not distance preponderated I should have approximated to see you.' Mr. Robinson thinks this was beaten by a native of India, who began a letter with the words, 'Honored Enormity.'

In the new book, 'Housland,' the fact is mentioned that eggs are scarcely ever eaten by the natives of West Africa, and when a traveller expresses a desire for them the natives at once disturb the various setting hens in order to sell their half-hatched progeny to the white man. As soon as the traveller acquires wisdom he

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tests all eggs before investing. If when he holds them up to the sun they appear light-colored and nearly transparent they are usually good. He will buy them also if they sink in water but not if they float. Mr. Robinson recently met a Kru native north of the Benue River but could not understand a word of the language he was speaking. The white man asked him if he could talk Arabic or Hausa and found that he had no knowledge of either. Then the young man was turned over to Dr. Totkin to see what he could make out of him, and it was finally elicited that the language he was speaking was English.

A recent explorer says that one of his greatest annoyances in Africa was the task of making his Arab servant, who slept sounder than any person he ever heard of before. The boy had some stories to tell concerning his ability in this line, one of which was that while he was travelling with an Arab in North Africa he slept one night with a donkey tethered to his leg to prevent it running away. When he woke in the morning he found that the donkey had wandered off a mile or so, dragging him along with it. The explorer says he believes the story is true.

Sometimes messengers are despatched across the Sahara desert for no other purpose than to carry a letter. A while ago a rich Arab died in Kano, one of the largest towns of the Sudan, just a little south of the desert. It was thought desirable to communicate the news to his friends in Tripoli as soon as possible, and so a Tuareg was selected as messenger, and he agreed to deliver the letter within forty-five days. He started on a running camel, which made an average of forty-five miles a day. The letter was safely delivered, and so was a letter to England, which was given to the messenger at the same time.

A recent traveller up the Niger River, West Africa, says that so absolute is the prohibition the Royal Niger Company has placed upon the importation of firearms and spirits above the actual delta of the Niger that he does not remember seeing a single bottle of liquor or more than a half dozen rifles in a journey of more than 1,000 miles through the Hausa States, east of the Niger and south of the Sahara Desert.

The scheme of M. de Lesseps and Commander Roudaire, about sixteen years ago, to cut a canal from the Mediterranean, at the southeast corner of Tunis, to admit a vast body of water into the desert, came to nothing save for one good result. In the desert the underground waters were tapped by an artesian well, the water from which still rises twenty-five feet into the air, and is used to irrigate about 500 acres of land on which date palms, pomegranates, tomatoes, onions, and cucumbers are now thriving where nothing could be induced to grow before the water sources were tapped.

ONLY SPAIN'S WAY.

Public Invited to Witness the Strangling of Sequestrators in Havana.

A copy of the newspaper La Lucha, published in Havana, Cuba, September 21 was brought to port by one of the crew of the Earn Line steamer Earnford, which vessel was in Havana on that date.

An advertisement in the La Lucha notifies the public that on the evening of September 21, Francisco Barroso y Ruel, convicted of the crimes of Rebellion and incendiarism, will enter the chapel and there make his peace with God before his execution the following morning, when he will be shot in the ditch of Laurel Grove.

'The Strangling' is the headline of another advertisement calling the public attention to the fact that on the following day, at 7 a. m., Manuel Rodriguez Rivero, Amador Perez Garcia and Nito Santa Cruz will be placed in the chapel of the condemned and be strangled the day after. The execution was advertised to take place in the ditch of Laurel Grove. Their crime was brigandage or being sequestrators.

The garrotting or strangling of the sequestrators was witnessed by one of the crew of the Earnford. Long before the hour of the execution Laurel Grove, which is a square surrounded by a high wall, and adjoining Moro Castle, was crowded with

people who made a fringe of humanity on the top of the walls.

The garrote was in the middle of the square upon a platform so situated that all the spectators could see it. The first of the sequestrators was a white man, who was accompanied by a priest, four attendants and a guard of soldiers. He was smoking a cigarette with all the nonchalance of a man going to a wedding feast instead of being the subject of his own funeral.

He took his seat in the fatal chair, but refused to wear the white cap, with openings for the eyes, which was attached as a cowl to his robe. The executioner dextrously arranged the collar around the man's neck. All was ready in a moment and the executioner gave a turn of a screw and bore down a lever. In five minutes a physician made an examination of the grinning corpse in the chair and declared life extinct. The body was removed by the other attendants and thrown behind the platform upon which the garrote stood.

The other two, who were colored men, were dispatched in the same way, but were longer in dying than their white companion. Their bodies were thrown on the ground, to be buried, it was said, in a pit, where the bodies of all victims are thrown and covered with quicklime.

The executioner is a lit prisoner, who is paid \$17 in gold for each man garrotted, which he is allowed to spend upon himself. He was dressed in black, with stripes of white on the back of his coat, such as prisoners in the penitentiary wear. Three months previously he had performed his first work as an executioner. He bungled the job so badly that his predecessor, a powerful black man, was called in to finish the job.

AN HISTORIC CANNON.

It Fired the Last Shot in the Last Battle of the Rebellion.

The cannon which fired the last shot in the last battle of the late war is a gun worth knowing something about. Hence, the sale of the 8 inch Columbiad, 'Lady Slocomb,' which is advertised in the Mobile Register to take place there on the 15th, arouses the interest of old soldiers and old soldiers' sons, for the reason that it is generally supposed to be the gun which fired the last shot of the war, or that fired so many deadly volleys in the last battle that took place during the civil war.

This last engagement, said an old soldier, took place at Spanish Fort. This engagement, of course, was not a regular battle, and is not, perhaps, recorded in history as such, but it was, nevertheless, a conflict fierce, and fire flew that day as never before. Gen. Forrest had sent to Spanish Fort during the last days of the war a sufficient force of men to guard the place, and among the number was the 5th Battalion of the Washington Artillery, Capt. Cutbert Slocomb in command. The Lady Slocomb was brought there, and there fired its last shots when Wilson's raiders stormed the place and took it. There the Lady Slocomb, for a few hours before the old fort was surrendered, belched forth fire and scattered death like an intelligent being, but to no avail, as the enemy numbered several times as much as the garrison.

After the surrender of the fort some of the members of Capt. Slocomb's command one night rolled the Lady Slocomb off the earthen embankment into a lagoon, or old slush hole, and buried it, giving as their reason that they did not want the gun to fall into the hands of the enemy. It was afterward dug up and carried to Mobile, where it was purchased by Henry Badger, a prominent Confederate of that place, who had served through the war, and knew of the excellence of the Lady Slocomb.

The gun was named after the wife of Capt. Cutbert Slocomb, who went out in 1862 in charge of the 5th Battalion of the Washington Artillery. The gun at the battle of Shiloh spat out its first smoke, and spread its first desolation in the ranks of the enemy. Through all the memorable struggles of the Army of the Tennessee it went and everywhere it gained well deserved renown. It was prettily mounted, and was at that time, as it probably is now, a handsome gun. Now the old relic is to be sold. The

estate of Henry Badger is being wound up, and the gun, along with other relics of the Confederacy, is to fall into the hands of others. Years ago several efforts were made by the Washington Artillery to buy the gun, and they will in all probability be heard from at the sale.

THE LITTLE FRENCH GIRL.

She is a Minda ure Woman and is Taught Feminine Arts.

However innocent she may be, a little French girl is much more of a little woman than a child of any other nationality. She does not romp; she is demure and quiet in her games, which are often imitations of a grown person's life. She is trying to learn how to be the mistress of her house by means of her dolls, furniture, kitchen and dishes. Feminine arts are still a part of every well arranged French education, writes Mme. Blanc in the Century. Men really care more for these accomplishments than for the others, as they make stay-at-home wives who look after their households; and as a Frenchwoman's principal aim is to please her future husband, every mother prepares her daughter for this end. This is why she does not permit to close an intimacy with little boy cousins, because ten years later a jealous husband would take a dislike to these friendly cousins; nor would he like his wife's bosom friends, in whom she confides, and who never leave her any better.

Mothers, therefore, permit few if any intimacies, and these are all winnowed with the greatest care. One advantage of this system is that the name of friend is not carelessly bestowed right and left; it takes time and good reasons for simple acquaintances to rise to that rank. The mother not only wards off little boy cousins and intimate girlfriends, but she discourages the little girl in showing off her knowledge out of the class-room, for she is fully aware that nothing could be less attractive in the eyes of the expected lord and master than a blue stocking.

A bright little girl I could name had, by chance, picked up some astronomical scraps, together with other scientific facts, which allowed her to shine now and then. One evening, while playing in the garden, she heard a friend of her father's exclaim: 'What a dazzling star!' 'That is not a star, sir,' she said; 'it is a planet.' Her mother was in despair, for she would rather a hundred times have found her ignorant than have seen her 'show off,' or capable of committing the enormity of contradicting an older person. 'I hope,' she said, jestingly, as a sort of excuse, 'that when she is 18 the poor little thing will have forgotten a great part of what she knows today!'

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