

## FRA DIAVOLA.

The well known opera of Fra Diavola, is based on tragical events which occurred in France nearly one hundred and seventy years ago. These facts are thus condensed from the court records of a Paris paper:

At the beginning of the last century there was to be seen in the town of Lille a very quiet house. It was a large building, but it contained a small family—a husband and wife and one servant girl. The Curialities Judiciaires add, that the married couple were advanced in years, and they lived quietly on their income, and saw very few visitors, and admitted no one to the house except the people who furnished them with provisions, or otherwise ministered to their wants.

One night this couple, man and wife, were robbed, and murdered in their bed.

The servant girl had heard nothing of all this, and knew not what was going on. The night was hot, the air dense, and oppressively sultry, so much so that she had taken refuge in her room, and sat, for the sake of coolness, divested of her garments before a large mirror. While there catching sight of herself, she suddenly cried, "How hateful one looks when naked!"

Having said this she retired and slept till morning, and rose as usual, without suspecting what had happened.

She prepared breakfast as usual for her master and mistress, but they did not come down. She was amazed and waited for a long time.

They did not appear.

Tired of waiting, she sought their room—A horrible sight met her eyes. Blood was smeared everywhere, and on the bed lay the poor old couple, cruelly, horribly, vilely butchered—mangled as only a beast or fiend could find in his heart to mutilate victims after murdering them.

The girl raised an alarm and the multitude came rushing in. Of course justice came rushing after in the form of the police, with a judicial investigation. The criminal was sought for, and as none other could be found, suspicion fell on the unfortunate servant. In those days they had a horrible way of getting at the truth. They called it questioning. The questions were put with racks and thumb-screws.

The Lilliois servant maid was infamously tortured, even to extreme agony.

Yet notwithstanding her weakness, and her sex, she endured the infernal torture without confessing anything. This was the more remarkable, as she was entirely innocent, and was in consequence kept much longer under torture to make her confess. As there were no proofs that she had done anything, they finally let her go, as soon as she was healed. Unfortunately the torture had made her a wretched cripple. She could only hobble along on her broken limbs, and her arms were withered.

And being no longer able to sew or work, she dragged her helpless form through the streets and begged. She begged through the streets of Lille for sixteen years. This is all historically true—nay more than historically; for history often lies, while these facts are drawn from the dry and accurate records of a court. The worst part of her suffering was that many people believed her guilty, and scorned her accordingly.

It appears from record that during these long years, while she went about with her withered arms, and bent back, her whole frame still suffering from the torture, begging a copper son to buy her bread, that she was always resigned, mild and exemplary in her conduct.

One day, after sixteen years of misery, she stopped to beg before the door of a baker. She held out through her rags her naked and mutilated arm toward the baker, who stood on his door sill. As she did so he exclaimed in a mocking tone, while observing her want of garments:

"Well Maria Anne, how hateful one looks when naked—ha?"

Now it is remembered that in all the sixteen years which had passed, Maria Anne had not forgotten these words which she had spoken when alone on the night of the murder. It flashed upon her mind, that the real murderer might have heard them, and that he stood before her. In brief, we learn that the journeyman baker, when arrested, confessed the truth. He had regularly supplied the old couple, and knew the ways of the house. He was hidden there on the night of the murder, and had heard the girl when she made the remark on her nakedness.

And as the criminal is often by the

will of Providence his own accuser, so this man, following one of those eccentric and dangerous impulses which men often experience, to say the most dangerous things, had uttered to the girl the words of the fatal night. He was convicted of the crime for which Maria Anne had been tortured, and suffered a living death—and was broken alive on the wheel in Lille.

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