

THE BEAUTIFUL MADAME TIQUET.

The gallantry of Louis XIV has been questioned; but he dealt with female criminals precisely as he did with the male. If he thought there were extenuating circumstances in the case of either he spared their lives. If a man and a woman were sentenced to death, he would pardon the former before the latter, if the circumstances in his case seemed to entitle him to the preference; not but he would much rather pardon the woman, if the cause of justice and morality seemed to justify his doing so. So great was the influence brought to bear upon the king in favor of Madame Tiquet, in 1699, that he hesitated whether he should commute her punishment to perpetual imprisonment, as implored to do by his friends, or allow her to go to the scaffold. But let us see what was the nature of the case. Madame Tiquet was no mere vulgar malefactor. So remarkable were her beauty and accomplishments that, in the records of the period in which she lived, she is pronounced "a masterpiece of nature." But we are told that her only inducement to marry M. Tiquet was the hope of making a very splendid figure in the fashionable world as his wife. Because he contrived to make her a present of a bouquet of diamonds worth fifteen thousand francs, she easily persuaded herself that he was very wealthy. Pretty soon after her marriage, however, she discovered that this was not the case; and her former indifference was changed to aversion, although his affection for her was such that he did all in his power to maintain appearances. She was scarcely three months married when she engaged in an intrigue with the Chevalier de Mongeorge. Even when this came to the knowledge of her husband, he does not seem to have annoyed her much; but one evening, when he came home somewhat later than usual, he was shot by an unseen hand at his own door. It was the opinion of the doctors that he would have been killed on the spot, had not the sudden alarm caused his heart to contract, so that it did not fill the usual space. Being asked by the police what enemy he could point to as most likely to have sought his life, he answered he had no enemy but his wife. She was highly indignant that any one should dare to suspect her, and persistently refused to abscond. Her numerous "woman's rights" friends made a great outcry when she was arrested, representing her as a much injured woman. Nor was it quite clear to the authorities that there was not some truth in the charge, until a certain laquay, called Auguste Catalain, voluntarily came forward and confessed that some months previously, he, Mours, the porter, and several others, had been engaged by Madame Tiquet to murder her husband. The other parties were promptly arrested; the fact of her guilt was established beyond all doubt, and she was condemned to die with her chief accomplice, Mours.

Now, be it observed, that among those who did all in their power to save her life was the husband whose blood she had paid for in advance. While scarcely recovered from his wounds, he threw himself at the feet of Louis XIV, and implored him to pardon her. Under such circumstances, it is not strange that the king hesitated. Madame Tiquet still maintained her innocence. Another remarkable circumstance in her case was that the judge who pronounced the sentence of death upon her had once been her lover; but he had now a duty to perform, nor did he shrink from it. According to the custom of the time, he bade her place herself on her knees before him, in order to confess her crime, and give such information as would bring her accomplices to justice. He then proceeded to pronounce an exhortation, in which he contrasted, in the most pathetic terms, her former and her present condition. "She who was once the idol of the world around her, blessed with beauty, youth, talent, rank, and affluence, was a criminal on her way to the scaffold. He entreated her to spend in repentance the short time that remained to her, and by an ample confession to relieve him from the pain of seeing her placed on the rack." But no use. We are told that, cold, motionless, and with unshaken voice, she answered him: "You are right. The past and the present are, indeed, strangely different; for then you were at my feet, now I am at yours! But I have done with such recollections. So far from fearing, I desire this moment that is to terminate my wretched life and release me from my misfortunes. I hope to meet my death with as much firmness as I have listened to its announcement; and be assured that neither fear nor pain shall induce me to confess myself guilty of a crime which I have never committed." But no sooner was Madame Tiquet brought to the rack than her resolution failed her, and she fully confessed her guilt, also that of her accomplice, Mours, but exonerates her lover, Mongeorge. The two criminals were brought to the scaffold in the same car; and both died side by side, the lady acknowledging the justice of her sentence, and begging forgiveness of him she had so cruelly injured.

EARLY HISTORY OF CAST IRON.—It is related that about the year 1700 one Abraham Darby, the proprietor of a brass foundry, in England, experimented in trying to substitute cast iron for brass, but without success, until the following incident occurred: A Welsh shepherd boy named John Thomas, to prevent being impressed as a soldier, requested his master to recommend him as an apprentice to a relative, who was one of the partners of Abraham Darby, and he was accordingly sent into the brass works. As he was looking on while the workmen were trying to cast iron, he said to Darby he thought he saw how they had missed it, and begged to try a method of his own. He and Mr. Darby remained alone in the shop that night and before morning they had cast an iron pot. He was at once engaged to remain and keep the secret, which he did faithfully, although double wages were offered him by other parties. For more than a hundred years after that night, the process of producing iron castings in a mould of fine sand with two wooden frames and air holes, was practiced and kept secret at the factory with plugged keyholes and barred doors.

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