

The Morning Post, 24th May 1898 and 25th May 1898

24th May

The Murder of a Bank Collector

The Paris Assize Court was to-day occupied by a cause célèbre, in which a man named Carrara and his wife are accused of having murdered a collector of the Comptoir National d'Escompte, who had called to present a bill. Owing to its shocking and mysterious circumstances, the crime created an immense sensation. To-day's trial began as usual by the Judge's questioning of the prisoners, but it will be preferable, rather than following the evidence, to briefly relate the crime itself.

The financial affairs of Carrara had not been prosperous for a long time. His first misdeed was to set fire to his stables in 1896 for the purpose of obtaining 2,300fr. from an Insurance Company. The success of this operation encouraged Carrara to try something on a larger scale, and, after discussion with his wife, it was decided to murder and rob one of the bank collectors who were sure to call on November 30 last, the day on which two bills given by Carrara fell due.

The first collector who called on the date in question was a powerful looking young man. He was allowed to depart in peace. The second who came was Lamarre. His attention was distracted by the woman Carrara pretending to fetch the money to pay the bill, and her husband, taking advantage of his inattention, killed him instantaneously by a blow on the head from an iron wrench. His collector's bag was then emptied of its contents – some 20,000fr. – and the corpse was suspended in the ventilating chimney of a mushroom gallery for concealment until the evening. Carrara then went out and tried to borrow money from his friends with a view to diverting suspicion in the event of Lamarre being traced to his house.

At night the furnace of the mushroom gallery was lighted and Lamarre's corpse was burned, nothing remaining but small pieces of metal, which Carrara buried in side galleries of catacomb. Eight hours were occupied in consuming the corpse.

On December 9 the police had succeeded in tracing Lamarre to Carrara's dwelling. Husband and wife indignantly denied knowing anything about him, but the discovery of 690fr. in a wardrobe led to their arrest, as they could not explain whence the money was obtained. Once in prison the husband began to accuse the wife and the wife to accuse the husband, and it was only through their mutual recriminations that the authorities were able to collect any evidence against them.

The Court was crowded to-day. The prisoners, when questioned by the Judge, persisted in accusing each other of having planned the crime. Carrara was cool and collected, but his wife fainted several times. Those witnesses who were heard had little of interest to relate, and the case was eventually adjourned until to-morrow.

25th May

The Murder of a Collector.

The Assize Court was again crowded on the resumption of the case this forenoon. There were no more witnesses to be heard, so the proceedings were opened by the Advocate-General's pleading for the prosecution. He was followed by Me. Decori, who defended the man Carrara and Me. Robert, who defended the woman. Both of these celebrities of the Paris Bar maintained their reputation for eloquence and legal skill, but, as was to be expected, their efforts were useless. The murderer of the bank collector Lamarre was sentenced to death, and his wife to penal servitude for life. When Carrara heard the sentence he was seized with a fit of convulsive trembling, while the woman was removed sobbing and repeating: "My children! My children!"