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From the New Monthly Magazine.

THE AIGULETS OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA.—(A SECRET ANECDOTE.)

The annals of gallantry, and even romantic fiction have opened few scenes more strangely magnificent than some of the incidents which mark the rapid but splendid career of that famous Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who was the idol minister of two monarchs, and the victim of favoritism.

Certain it is, when Villiers was on his short embassy in France that he dared to become the impassioned lover of Anne of Austria, the consort of Louis XIII. The mysterious interview in the garden at Amiens is mystically revealed in the verses of Voiture, for poets are great tattlers in the history of love affairs. The Queen, even a refined coquette, was herself seduced by Buckingham's personal fascination. Deeply enamored of the peerless Englishman, she ventured to give an evidence of her devotion of a very extraordinary nature. The rival of Buckingham, both in love and politics, the subdolous Richelieu, flattered his vengeance that by a bold stroke, he would have been enabled to have exposed this testimony of the Queen's frailty to the eyes of the luckless monarch, who was already kindled by inextinguishable jealousies. Richelieu's extraordinary attempt seems to have led to circumstances on the part of Buckingham which may almost render the tale incredible; but when a minister of state degenerates into a romantic lover and the honor of the *dame de sespenees* is in jeopardy, we must recollect that it requires little exertion to set in motion all the resources of power and the whole machinery of the State. The particulars which we are about to relate are strange, but appear authentic; for they are confirmed by a positive assertion in the memoirs of the Duke of Rochefoucauld. The romantic incident, which has been preserved by a French manuscript, is not indeed to be found among the writers of secret memoirs in our own country, where, indeed, the secret must have been confined to the two personages, neither of whom would willingly have revealed it to the other; but this did not happen at the court of the Louvre, where it not only excited a deeper interest than at the conrt of St. James, but involved the fate and baffled the designs of the highest personages who were the actors in this little drama.

The French monarch had presented his Queen with an uncommon present, whose fashion and novelty at the time were considered as the most beautiful ornament worn. It was what the French term *des ferrets d'aiguillettes des diamans*—aigulets, or points tagged with diamonds.

On the arrival of Buckingham, every day was a festival. Richelieu gave a magnificent entertainment in the gardens of Ruel, the most beautiful in France; the nobility pride themselves on their suppers, balls, concerts and masquerades. Buckingham danced with all his peculiar graces; the Queen honored him as her partner in what is called a "counter dance," (or, as we commonly call it, a country dance.) "And as in this English dance opportunities are continually occurring to approach one another, to give and to cross their hands, the eyes, the gestures of timidity or boldness, and a thousand indescribable things are too intelligible, though they pass amidst the silence in which such spectacles are performed out of respect to the public." This Frenchman describes our obsolete country dances to have been as dangerous as were our *waltzes* on their first introduction.

Richelieu was jealously watchful of what was passing; the countess of Lenoy gave him an account of every thing her prying eyes could discover. Under the specious title of Dame d'Honnear, our Kings have found means to place near their Queens a perpetual *surveillance*. But as the Superintendent of the Royal House has private *entrees de cobinet*, at all times which are not the privilege of the *Dames de Honnear*, Madame de Chevreuse passed whole hours alone with the Queen, and the Cardinal, however well informed of the exterior, knew very little of what passed between the Queen and her friend. The French minister pressed Buckingham to close the negotiation of the marriage of Henrietta; but Villiers had no desire to quit the French Court, always finding some occasion for delay. At length the ceremony was performed with great splendor. In all that had hitherto passed, the Queen had received from Buckingham many proofs of his lively but respectful passion. She certainly was not insensible to love, and if she really caught the flame she had herself lighted up, there is no doubt that her virtue supported her, and that Buckingham departed with all the honorable treatment which a stranger can receive from a great court, and only vexed to recross the seas without any other fruits of his love than that of having been listened to with favor.

There was one indiscretion which escaped from the Queen. On the evening of Buckingham's departure she sent the Duke secretly by Madame de Chevreuse the gift she had received from her royal consort, the aigulets tagged with diamonds; and this present, which might have been considered a mark of the magnificence of the Queen, became by the circumstance of the gift and the pleasure of the mystery, an act of delicate gallantry which charmed the English Duke, and sent him home a happy man.

During the journey of Buckingham, the countess of *Clarik*, (probably the countess of Carlisle, for Frenchmen generally spell our names by their ear, which is very bad,) somewhat in pique at what she had heard of the infidelity of her straying admirer, had found a secret way to correspond with Richelieu, who on his part had not omitted any thing which tended to inflame the English Countess. This great minister was well known for multiplying all sorts of means to gain intelligence from all the courts of Europe, his industry never slumbered, and his treasure was never spared. The present which the Queen had made of her aigulets tagged with diamonds had not escaped the vigilant eyes of the *Dame d'Honnear*, and the secret had reached Richelieu. This minister had long watched his opportunity to ruin the Queen in the mind of the King, over whom, indeed, he himself exercised the greatest authority, but which was sometimes balanced by the queen. Richelieu wrote to the Countess of *Clarik*, desiring her to renew her intimacy with Buckingham, and if in any of the approaching entertainments which would take place on her return, she should observe in his dress aigulets tagged with diamonds, that she would contrive to cut off two or three, and despatch these to him. Buckingham was too feeble to resist the studied seductions of his old friend; and the countess found no difficulty in accomplishing her task. At a ball at Windsor Castle, Buckingham appeared in a black velvet suit, with gold embroidery; a scarf was flung over his shoulder; and from a knot of blue ribbons hung twelve aigulets tagged with diamonds, flaming their hues on the surface on which they played. When Buckingham had retired home from the ball, his valets de chambre perceived that two of the twelve aigulets were missing, and they convinced him that these had not been dropped by any accident, but had positively been cut off. There was something in his recollection that evening which bred a suspicion. He felt conscious that whoever had done this had some latent motive. The secret history of these diamond aigulets could only be known to their wearer, yet notwithstanding, and as it were by intuition, he thought that the honor of the royal giver might in some mode or other be concerned in possessing these twelve aigulets entire. He decided that, notwithstanding the artifice of the cunning purloiner, he would prevent any design, if there was any, of the enemies of the Queen that the number should be diminished.

With his extraordinary rapidity of conception, Buckingham struck out a gigantic scheme which no one less than a minister of State and the most romantic lover could have executed. Early in the morning, couriers were despatched to close the ports, and neither the packet boat with the mail nor any vessel sailing for France was suffered to depart. At that moment when the Rochellers were waiting for the promised reinforcements from England, a universal panic struck both nations, and war seemed on the point of declaration. However, this sudden cessation of national intercourse was only to gain a single day, that his celebrated jeweller might at any cost, and with all his skill, procure two aigulets tagged with diamonds, of the same size and appearance with the remaining ten. What cannot such a man and such means effect? The work was finished; and on the following day France and England were at peace. The ports were re-opened, and Buckingham despatched a secret messenger to France, who conveyed the twelve aigulets tagged with diamonds to the hands of Madame de Chevreuse. He acquainted her with his secret adventure, and communicated his suspicions of the Countess of *Clarik*, who was frequently by his side during the ball and with whom he had danced. He requested the Queen would receive back what he himself had valued most, lest any concealed mystery should prove ruinous to her quiet. The precaution was not useless; for as soon as Richelieu had received the two tags of diamonds sent him by the Countess of *Clarik*, this minister who was trying all methods to ruin the Queen in the King's favor, and the royal jealousy had already broken out on her intercourse with Buckingham, now hit on what he concluded to be a certain triumph. He put into the King's head to request the Queen would dress herself more frequently with the diamond aigulets, for that he had been secretly informed that she had valued his present so lightly as to have given it away, or had sold them, for that an English jeweller had offered to sell him two of these aigulets.

The blow aimed by Richelieu rebounded on himself. The Queen, affecting no surprise, with apparent simplicity commanded instantly that her casket of jewels should be brought and opened by the King. He had the satisfaction of counting the twelve aigulets tagged with diamonds, and seeing the Queen more beautiful than ever by wearing his gift on that day. Her Majesty had also the satisfaction of learning that the King severely reprimanded Richelieu for his perpetual suspicions and his false intelligence; and Richelieu doubtless must have astonished the Countess of *Clarik*, by return of post, in expressing his indignation at being so inconceivably mystified.

Such is the story, which it will be acknowledged is at least amusing. It seems so far authentic that it appears to have been written by some contemporary at the French Court, which we may infer by the cautious defence of the character of Anne of Austria, whose coquetry the writer has palliated and whose virtue he imagines was her sufficient safeguard. The incredible part is the extraordinary expedient of Buckingham in shutting the ports for a single day while his jeweller was working on the two aigulets to supply the missing ones. The romantic and determined character of Villiers admits the possibility of so bold a manœuvre; but still we can hardly satisfy ourselves of the veracity of this singular tale, without granting Buckingham a depth and rapidity of penetration beyond his accustomed volatile habits. Love and honor may be sufficient for his inspiration on this occasion; and as the fact, with some of the details, is alluded to by the Duke of Rouchefoucauld in his Memoirs, we cannot condemn this anecdote of secret history as a mere fiction.

From the London New Monthly Magazine.

CHAPTERS FROM THE NOTE BOOK OF A DECEASED LAWYER.

No. 1.

One of the most extraordinary and most interesting trials of which I find any account in my note book, took place on the Northern Circuit, very little less than fifty years ago.

In the year 17—, John Smith was indicted for the wilful murder of Henry Thomson. The case was one of a most extraordinary nature, and the interest excited by it was almost unparalleled. The accused was a gentleman of considerable property, residing upon his own estate, in an unfrequented part of ——shire. A person, supposed to be an entire stranger to him, had, late in a summer's day, requested and obtained shelter and hospitality for the night. He had, it was supposed, after taking some slight refreshment, retired to bed in perfect health' requesting to be awakened at an early hour the following morning. When the person appointed to call him entered his room for that purpose, he was found in his bed perfectly dead; and, from the appearance of the body, it was obvious that he had been so for many hours. There was not the slightest mark of violence on his person, and the countenance retained the same expression which it had borne during life. Great consternation was, of course, excited by this discovery, and inquiries were immediately made—first, as to whom the stranger was—and, secondly, as to how he met with his death. Both were unsuccessful. As to the former, no information could be obtained—no clue discovered to lead to the knowledge either of his name, his person, or his occupation. He had arrived on horseback, and was seen passing through a neighboring village about an hour before he reached the house where his existence was so mysteriously terminated, but could be traced no farther. Beyond this, all was conjecture.

With respect to the death, as little could be learned as of the dead man. It was, it is true, sudden—awfully sudden; but there was no reason, that alone excepted, to suppose that it was caused by the hand of man, rather than the hand of God. A coroner's jury was, of course, summoned, and after an investigation, in which little more could be proved than that which I have here stated, a verdict was returned to the effect that the deceased *died by the visitation of God*.—Days and weeks passed on, and little further was known. In the meantime, rumor had not been idle: suspicions—vague, indeed, and undefined, but of a dark and fearful character—were at first whispered, and afterwards boldly expressed. The precise object of these suspicions was not clearly indicated; some implicated one person, some another, but they all pointed to Smith, the master of the house, as concerned in the death of the stranger. As usual in such cases, circumstances totally unconnected with the transaction in question, matters many years antecedent, and relating to other persons as well as other times, were used as auxiliary to the present charge. The character of Smith, in early life, had been exposed to much observation. While his father was yet alive, he had left his native country, involved in debt, known to have been guilty of great irregularities, and suspected of having been not over-scrupulous as to the mode of obtaining those supplies of money of which he was continually in want, and which he seemed somewhat inexplicably to procure.

Ten years and more had elapsed since his return; and the events of his youth had been forgotten by many, and to many were entirely unknown; but, on this occasion, they were revived, and, probably, with considerable additions.

Two months after the death of the stranger, a gentleman arrived at the place, impressed with a belief that he was his brother, and seeking for information either to confirm or refute his suspicions. The horse and the clothes of the unfortunate man still remained, and were instantly recognized: one other test there was, though it was uncertain whether that would lead to any positive conclusion:—the exhumation of the body. This test was tried; and, although decomposition had gone on rapidly, yet enough remained to identify the body, which the brother did most satisfactorily. As soon as it was known that there was a person authorized by relationship to the deceased to inquire into the cause of his death, and, if it should appear to have been otherwise than natural, to take steps for bringing to justice those who had been concerned in it, the reports which had been previously floating idly about, and circulated without having any distinct object, were collected into one channel and poured into his ear. What these reports were, and what they amounted to, it is not necessary here to mention: suffice it to say, that the brother laid before the magistrates of the district such evidence as induced them to commit Mr. Smith to gaol, to take his trial for the wilful murder of Henry Thomson. As it was deemed essential to the attainment of justice to keep secret the examination of the witnesses who were produced before the magistrates, all the information of which the public were in possession before the trial took place, was that which I have here narrated.

Such was the state of things upon the morning of the trial. Seldom, perhaps, had speculation been so busy as it was upon this occasion. Wagers to a considerable amount were depending upon the event of the case: so lightly do men think and act with reference to matters in which they are not personally concerned, even though the life of a fellow-creature is involved in the issue.—The personal character of the presiding judge was not without its weight, in influencing opinions as to the probability of conviction or acquittal. That judge was a man whom, living, I so sincerely loved, and whose memory I now so truly venerate, that I dare not, even at this distance of time, trust myself to speak of him as I feel, lest I should be suspected of partiality. He was the late Lord Mansfield—a man who, in addition to the other eminent judicial qualities which belonged to him, possessed some which peculiarly fitted him for investigating such a case, as well as some which were thought to bear against his fitness. Before his elevation to the judicial bench, he had been for some years not only one of the most eloquent debaters, but one of the most powerful reasoners, in the House of Commons; and had acquired the reputation, which he richly deserved, of possessing a power of discriminating between truth and falsehood rarely attained by any individual. But, at the same time, he was more than suspected of being deficient in that firmness of purpose, that moral courage, essential to the efficient discharge of his high functions in a case where doubtful and difficult questions were almost certain to arise, which a timid man, fearful of committing himself, would rather avoid than decide upon.

The recollection of Lord George Gordon's riots, then fresh in the mind of every man, tended very much, in the breast of the common people to strengthen this opinion. The belief was general, and I confess that even my affection cannot lead me to doubt its accuracy, that in a great measure at least, the scenes of that fearful time were to be attributed to the timidity and indecision of this otherwise great man. The King had publicly declared that the magistrates had failed in their duty; and this reproach applied with peculiar force to the Lord Chief Justice of England. Had he but employed those powers with which the constitution had armed him for the early suppression of the riots, the metropolis would not have been given up for a week to the uncontrolled dominion of a lawless mob, nor that melodramatic jumble of tragedy and comedy been enacted which cannot now be thought of without amazement, and which has no parallel in modern history.

Lord Mansfield's charge to the grand jury upon the subject of this murder had excited a good deal of attention. He had recommended them, if they entertained reasonable doubts of the sufficiency of the evidence to ensure a conviction, to throw out the *Bill*, explaining to them most justly and clearly that, in the event of their doing so, if any additional evidence should, at a future time, be discovered the prisoner could again be apprehended and tried for the offence; if they found a true Bill, and from deficiency of proof, he was now acquitted on his trial, he could never again be molested, even though the testimony against him should be morally as clear as light. The grand jury after, as was supposed, very considerable discussion among themselves and, as was rumored, by a majority of only *one*, returned a *true Bill*. After the charge I have mentioned, it was conjectured that the proofs offered to the grand jury must have been strong to authorise such a finding, and a strong impression in consequence prevailed that there would ultimately be a conviction. As if to show, however, how uncertain all conjecture must be by those who are mere spectators of what is going on, the next morning a different current was given to the tide of popular opinion. At the sitting of the court an application was made by the counsel for the Crown to postpone the trial to the next assizes, on the ground that a clue had just been obtained to evidence of a most important nature, which could not be procured in time for the present assizes, and without which those who conducted the prosecution thought it would not be safe to proceed to trial. The application was of course strenuously opposed by the counsel for the prisoner. It was urged in his behalf, that as this was a case in which no bail could be taken, the granting it would have the effect of keeping him in gaol many months, when he was ready to take his trial: and it was said that this was not a common case, where the committal of the offender was in pursuance of a finding by a coroner's jury, and therefore where the prosecutor was compelled to come prepared with the best evidence he could procure; but that the prosecutor had, without interference, and without compulsion, selected his own time for the apprehension of the prisoner, and the statement of the charge; and that he was bound, therefore, to be furnished with proofs in support of the accusation he had made. These arguments were not without their weight; and Lord Mansfield refused to postpone the trial. As the application avowedly had proceeded upon the insufficiency of the evidence at present in the prosecutor's possession to substantiate the offence, expectations of his acquittal were confidently entertained and unreservedly expressed during the short period that intervened before the trial which was fixed for the following morning, and which, without any thing material occurring on the one side or the other, took place at the appointed time.

Never shall I forget the appearance of anxiety exhibited upon every countenance on the entrance of the Judge into court. In an instant the most profound silence prevailed; and interest, intense and impassioned, though subdued, seemed to wait upon every word and every look, as if divided between expectation and doubt, whether something might not yet even interfere to prevent the extraordinary trial from taking place. Nothing, however, occurred; and the stillness was broken by the mellow and silvery voice of Lord Mansfield—"*Let John Smith be placed at the bar.*" The order was obeyed; and as the prisoner entered the dock, he met on every side the eager and anxious eye of a countless multitude bent in peircing scrutiny upon his face. And well did he endure that scrutiny. A momentary suffusion covered his cheeks; but it was only momentary, and less than might have been expected from an indifferent person, who found himself on a sudden, "the observed of all observers." He bowed respectfully to the court; and then folding his arms, seemed to wait until he should be called upon to commence his part in that drama in which he was to perform so conspicuous a character. I find it difficult to describe the effect produced on my mind by his personal appearance; yet his features were most remarkable, and are indelibly impressed on my memory. He was apparently between forty and fifty years of age; his hair, grown grey either from toil, or care, or age, indicated an approach to the latter period; while the strength and uprightness of his figure, the haughty coldness of his look, and an eye that spoke of fire, and pride, and passion ill-concealed, would have led conjecture to fix on the former. His countenance, at the first glance, appeared to be that which we are accustomed to associate with deeds of high and noble daring, but a second and more attentive examination of the face and brow was less satisfactory. There was indeed strongly marked the intellect to conceive and devise schemes of high import; but I fancied that I could trace, in addition to it, caution to conceal the deep design, a power to penetrate the motives of others, and to personate a character at variance with his own, and a cunning that indicated constant watchfulness and circumspection. Firmness there was, to persevere to the last: but that was equivocal, and I could not help persuading myself that it was not of that character which would prompt to deeds of virtuous enterprize, or to "seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth," but that it was rather allied to that quality which would "let no compunctious visitings of Nature shake his fell purpose," whatever it might be. The result of this investigation into his character, such as it was, was obviously unfavorable, and yet there were moments when I thought I had meted to him a hard measure of justice, and when I was tempted to accuse myself of prejudice in the opinion I had formed of him; and particularly when he was asked by the clerk the usual question, "*Are you guilty, or not guilty?*" as he drew his form up to the fullest height, and the fetters clanked upon his legs, as he answered with unfaltering tongue and unblenching cheek, "*not guilty,*" my heart smote me for having involuntarily interpreted against him every sign that was doubtful.

The counsel for the prosecution opened his case to the jury in a manner that indicated very little expectation of a conviction. He began by imploring them to divest their minds of all that they had heard before they came into the box; he entreated them to attend to the evidence, and judge from that alone. He stated that, in the course of his experience, which was very great, he had never met with a case involved in deeper mystery than that upon which he was then addressing them. The prisoner at the bar was a man moving in a respectable station in society, and maintaining a fair character. He was, to all appearance, in the possession of considerable property, and was above the ordinary temptations to commit so foul a crime. With respect to the property of the deceased, it was strongly suspected that he had either been robbed of, or in some inexplicable manner made way with, gold and jewels to a very large amount; yet, in candor, he was bound to admit that no portion of it, however trifling, could be traced to the prisoner. As to any motive of malice or revenge, none could by possibility be assigned, for the prisoner and the deceased were, as far as could be ascertained, total strangers to each other. Still there were most extraordinary circumstances connected with his death, pregnant with suspicion at least, and imperiously demanding explanation; and it was justice, no less to the accused than to the public, that the case should undergo judicial investigation. The deceased, Henry Thomson, was a jeweller, residing in London, wealthy, and in considerable business; and, as was the custom of his time, in the habit of personally conducting his principal transactions with the foreign merchants with whom he traded. He had travelled much in the course of his business in Germany and Holland; and it was to meet at Hull a trader of the latter nation, of whom he was to make a large purchase, that he had left London before his death. It would be proved by the landlord of the inn, where he had resided, that he and his correspondent had been there, and a wealthy jeweller of the town, well acquainted with both parties, had seen Mr. Thomson after the departure of the Dutchman; and could speak positively to there being then in his possession, jewels of large value, and gold, and certain bills of exchange, the parties to which he could describe. This was on the morning of Thomson's departure from Hull, on his return to London, and was on the day but one preceding that on which he arrived at the house of the prisoner. What had become of him in the interval could not be ascertained; nor was the prisoner's house situated in the road which he ought to have taken. No reliance, however, could be placed on that circumstance; for it was not at all uncommon for persons who travelled with property about them, to leave the direct road, even for a considerable distance, in order to secure themselves as effectually as possible from the robbers by whom the remote parts of the country were infested. He had not been seen from the time of his leaving Hull till he reached the village next adjoining Smith's house, and the next morning was discovered dead in his bed. He now came to the most extraordinary part of the case. It would be proved beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the deceased died by *poison*—poison of a most subtle nature, most active in its operation, and possessing the wonderful and dreadful quality of leaving no external mark or token by which its presence could be detected. The ingredients of which it was composed were of so sedative a nature, that, instead of the body on which it had been used exhibiting any contortions, or marks of suffering, it left upon the features nothing but the calm and placid quiet of repose. Its effects, and indeed its very existence, were but recently known in this country, though it had for some time been used in other nations of Europe; and it was supposed to be a discovery of the German chemists, and to be produced by a powerful distillation of the seed of the wild cherry tree, so abundant in the Black Forest.

But the fact being ascertained that the cause of the death was poison, left open the much more momentous question—by whom was it administered? It could hardly be supposed to be by the deceased himself: there was nothing to induce such a suspicion; and there was this important circumstance, which of itself almost negatived its possibility, that no phial, or vessel of any kind, had