

THE MAN'S MILLIONS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVELATION.

Denise sat a simple and even innocent young girl, but she did not look as such...

After dinner Miss Ramel showed Denise the room that she was to have; then they went to the rose-colored reception room...

The young girl opened the conversation as briefly as possible, without any details...

Denise was amazed. She had just learned how Lucien and Germaine had found each other...

Denise, in turn, told Madame Ramel how she had lived since her departure from Vignotte...

Madame Ramel felt that she must not tell Madame Ramel that she had just left prison at Blois to come to Paris to see her brother...

Unconsciously she would tell that she had been falsely accused, taken off by the police...

In the afternoon she tried to see Monsieur Parizot in the Count's private office...

To compensate her she had the pleasure, before dinner, of a good hour alone with Lucien...

While listening to his sister's idyllic Lucien thought of Kogentz Lorena and sighed...

After a moment's silence Denise answered: "Lucien, just now you said to me: 'I am working, and shall work still more to get a dowry for you.'"

"Well, Lucien, listen to me. Work, sell your pictures, get rich, and become, if you can, a great painter like M. Georges Ramel; but you do not dream of accumulating a dowry which I do not want."

CHAPTER VI. THE SEARCH. A week after M. Joramie's will was read in the presence of the relatives...

Monsieur Parizot knew that the important mission with which he was charged and which he accepted with pleasure...

The unfortunate Claire Guerin, he said to himself, had committed a sin of which she was not alone guilty...

So thought the good Monsieur Parizot, and immediately began his investigations...

Everywhere he went the same reply. Since Claire Guerin had left Bourgois, driven away by her father, nothing had ever been heard of her...

Monsieur Parizot paid a visit to the oldest of the Guering, a man of 82 years, a brother of the former vicar of Bourgois...

"So," said he to Monsieur Parizot, "you have come, like all the others, to get information about Claire Guerin; it is quite useless, I assure you."

For a week longer Monsieur Parizot continued his useless search and then returned to Paris, desolate over his failure.

The Count then resorted to advertisements, which, worded with great care...

"My dear child," said Monsieur Parizot to Denise one morning, "your brother said that you have some serious things to say to me, a secret to confide to me. Is it really a secret?"

"Yes, sir; I have a secret and a story, a very old story, to tell you."

"Monsieur Parizot's first thought was that the young girl was going to tell him her own history and confess some grave error...

"Oh! be easy," said Monsieur Parizot, "no one can hear us, and we shall not be disturbed, for Madame Ramel rarely rises before 8 or 8.30. So you can speak without fear."

"In the first place, sir, I must tell you that, before coming to Paris, I was for nearly two years a servant at the farm of Grandval."

"No, but I know there is a farm at Grandval in the league of Blois."

"Really, Monsieur Parizot, one would think that you had been in that section."

"Oh! I have traveled a great deal," answered the old man, smiling. "And you were a servant at this farm of Grandval?"

"Yes, Monsieur Parizot."

"Then your master was M. Parizot, the present farmer there?"

"My dear child, I know many people, but I have only heard of your former master, but I never saw him."

"He has two, Denise."

"Possible; but I know only the one whom I have seen at the farm."

"What is his name?"

"Joseph Rabiot, but he is not his real name."

"Of course, Joseph Rabiot could have only been a nickname."

"It was once applied to her because she was unwilling to tell any one her name or when she came from, and it stuck to her and she was never called anything else."

"The old man made the circuit of the room with a jerky, feverish step, chopping short his words of wrath, and to the young girl, who, trembling, did not take her eyes from him."

"My dear child," said he, trying to calm his agitation, "now come with me, said the old man, 'we must find the Count de Solaure.'"

"They found the door of the count's room open. His astonished gaze questioned Monsieur Parizot, who quickly repeated to the count what Denise had said."

"The count turned deadly pale. He sank heavily into his arm-chair, murmuring: 'The wretches!'"

"Fortunately," continued Monsieur Parizot, "Denise Mored was the friend and confidant of Claire Guerin. Through her we shall find out what became of the child."

The account of your marriage, but you will leave the farm and go to Paris, where you will see M. Parizot, and to him you will tell all."

"The wretches were mistaken: they failed in their purpose. If it had not been noticed that the servant had been thrown into the pool by this unknown person, this beggar, who disappeared immediately after the crime..."

"Ah! I understand," cried the old man, admiringly. "Justly accused of a horrible crime, imprisoned, threatened with trial, you had the courage to keep silent."

"Ah! Denise, what a brave girl you are! You dear child, you have been, without knowing it, heroic; but first of all, Denise," continued Monsieur Parizot, with breathless eagerness, "tell me, if you know it, the name of the victim of Joseph Rabiot, and the Parizots."

"Her name was Claire Guerin."

"Claire Guerin, Claire Guerin!" exclaimed the old man with flashing eyes, and jumping up with a bound as if an electric current had been sent through him. "Ah! I was waiting for you, Denise, the name I had guessed at, Claire Guerin, Claire Guerin!"

Denise looked at him, stopped.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

"The matter, Denise; the matter! I will tell you. O Providence, Providence! And I doubted you! Denise, the old servant who was with you at the farm of Grandval, this unfortunate woman murdered by wretches, this Claire Guerin, in short, is a woman whom the Count de Solaure and I have been looking for everywhere in vain; we have done everything to find her, everything. We were searching for her and she is dead, dead! Oh! the wretches!"

"The young girl raised her eyes to heaven, clasping her hands, then she looked at Monsieur Parizot, and said: 'I know his name, Monsieur Parizot, it is Claire Guerin, who was a young girl; he made her a mother... Before dying, this man, whose name was Paul Joramie...'"

"Of course, since you know Claire Guerin's name, Denise, thanks to you, we shall be able to find the veil that still hides from us the poor Claire's mysterious past. Before dying, M. Paul Joramie, who had never forgotten the only woman he had ever really loved, made his will in her favor and appointed the Count de Solaure his executor."

"Claire Guerin was heir to nearly thirty millions, and now, Denise, you understand why we have been searching so actively for Claire in order to put her in possession of M. Joramie's millions; but another and another of the will they will take the millions if, after a certain number of years, Claire Guerin has not been found; the instrument of death given the unfortunate woman into their hands, and they have killed her! Oh! the wretches!"

"Denise," he continued, with a gleaming countenance, "the wretches do not suspect that you are to-day the instrument of death, and that he has brought you here to denounce the crime and make us to understand the precious revelations."

"There was another servant with me at Grandval; she was over 80 years old, and had been a servant on the farm nearly forty-five years. She had taken me into her friendship, and I loved her very much, Monsieur Parizot; we were like mother and daughter to each other. My poor Beau-Souppe."

"Ah! this old servant was called Beau-Souppe?"

"Yes, Denise."

"It was once applied to her because she was unwilling to tell any one her name or when she came from, and it stuck to her and she was never called anything else. But when she came to the farm she told her name to the mistress, who entered it into a little account book."

"One day Madame Parizot chanced to find in the book the name written by her predecessor and also the date of the old servant's arrival at the farm. But she was not quite sure that this was the name of Beau-Souppe. She did everything in her power to find out and induce the servant to tell her story, but in vain. Beau-Souppe remained dumb; she had sworn never to tell who she was and always to keep silence regarding her past. But then it came into her mind to ask her name, and she told her name, and she was not alone guilty, but she had recognized under many different circumstances."

"From that moment she lost her peace of mind; she had dark forebodings, and I tried in vain to reassure her. She shook her head sadly and said to me: 'Now that these people know I have done nothing to them. I am their enemy; they are afraid of me... embarrases them; they are interested in getting rid of me. You will see, Denise, they will kill me.'"

"And they killed her!" exclaimed the old man.

"Yes, Monsieur Parizot, they have killed her."

"Oh," exclaimed the old man, who had become as white as a sheet.

"Denise, has not the crime been discovered? Did not justice intervene?"

CHAPTER IX. THE TOWER. Joseph Rabiot was suspicious, but his ardent did not prevent him from unflinchingly making the sacrifice necessary to the execution of his bold plot. He knew that emetics are not made without breaking eggs. He had resolved to risk his reserve of forty thousand francs and his hands."

To marry the heir of M. Joramie, what a master-stroke! The mansion of the Avenue de Wagram, with its palatial furniture, the chateaux, the farms and the millions would all be his, except a million which he would give to the Parizots, and another million to Mademoiselle Anastasia and her father."

Contented or not, the cousins could not say anything. He had them in his power and had nothing to fear from them. They were all his accomplices. But he had another partner, Henry Cordier, who had had his power as completely as Rabiot had his cousin's in his. Cordier always wanted money and his patron never gave him enough. He made the coin dance as they say. "He is a veritable leech," said Rabiot. But he had to comply with the demands."

"After all," said Rabiot to himself, when not too angry at Cordier, "when once I get the millions I can easily afford to be bled for a few hundred thousand francs and will throw them to him as I would a bone to a dog; but only on condition that he will at once leave France and never let me hear of him again."

The villa which Rabiot had hired at Ville d'Avray was named The Tower. It was an old house, with thick walls. It was situated on the north by a large, square tower, or, rather, the remains of a tower.

The house had been frequently repaired, but was evidently built at the same time as the tower. The two walls were locked into each other, and combined, were at least a yard and a half thick, showing that there could be no communication between the two buildings.

The tower was entered by a cellar and lighted only by loopholes, in which narrow bars their nests. The stone steps of the staircase were so shaky that no one could venture on them without running serious risk of his life. The tower was abandoned to the bats and owls.

Many things indicated that the house and tower were formerly parts of some important structure, a chateau, monastery or abbey. In the first place, there were well preserved bits of sculptures; then in the garden there were venerable trees, and in a second inclosure, included in Rabiot's lease, some old pieces of crackered wall, besides a deep hole, the internal masonry of which seemed covered with ivy. This hole was more than a yard in diameter and thirty feet deep, and its mouth was hidden by a thick growth of wild climatis. Was it a well which had run dry, or one of those mysterious and terrible abysses called abisses in feudal times, which were the memory of buildings that had disappeared?

About two hundred yards from the Tower was another house of equal age and just like it, except that it lacked the old tower. The two dwellings seemed to be two pavilions left standing to perpetuate the memory of buildings that had disappeared.

The cooper of Beaugency, Anastasia's father, had closed his shop and come to Ville d'Avray to live. He occupied a little house and did nothing more than to be a servant. It was his role. He was at the same time porter and gardener, and attended to the cellar.

He was to see his daughter secretly when they had occasion to talk, for outwardly Denise was not to be seen. He was to suspect that they were relatives. Monsieur Parizot showed the respect of a faithful servant for his mistress's wishes.

He attended to the cook, a woman of 40, who was thoroughly devoted to Rabiot, though absolutely ignorant of his plots.

CHAPTER X. THE WATER OF CEYLON. Rabiot had heard of an individual who manufactured love potions, like the sorcerers of olden times. He had seen the positive effects of these potions, but he had no belief in their power, but he had been told that the person in question concealed poisons and narcotics, which he sold secretly when occasion offered.

He succeeded in finding the person, and he was not without a certain amount of success. He had seen the positive effects of these potions, but he had no belief in their power, but he had been told that the person in question concealed poisons and narcotics, which he sold secretly when occasion offered.

So Rabiot went to see the philter-maker, whom he found to be a person of about 60, thin, with a long and dirty coat, and resembling a sorcerer only by his bald head, his long, gray, uncombed beard, and his dirty clothing. His name was Loriot. He had been in the service of a certain Count Cadran, who was very expert in the art of concocting poisons and narcotics, and whose secrets he had learned. The Count, being dead, he had succeeded him, but on a smaller scale.

He had a secret laboratory in a cellar, where at night he made his liquors, which he sold in prices varying the ability of his customers to pay. After examining Rabiot carefully, and instinctively recognizing him as a rival of his own sort, he asked him to make known the object of his visit. Rabiot explained his situation frankly, without giving his name.

"Yes, yes; I see," said Loriot, "you want a mixture which, without destroying physical strength, will so act on the nervous system as to weaken mental faculties in such a way that no doctor can discover the cause of the cerebral affection."

"Exactly," said Rabiot; "can you get me such a drug?"

Loriot opened a cupboard hidden in the wall and selected one from a number of labeled flasks. Holding it up before Rabiot's eyes, he said:

"On the label Rabiot read these words: 'Water of Ceylon.'"

"That is it," said Loriot, laconically. And seeing that Rabiot was suspicious, he continued:

"My Water of Ceylon is one of my most precious concoctions. If it were known, I could make enough of it. But one cannot advertise these things as he would Swiss pills. I learned Brahmin was the first to discover the property of the materials from which the Water of Ceylon is made. The liquid is very powerful. The person who takes only two drops daily in his wine, water or other beverage, exhibits successively the most singular phenomena. He does not lose his physical strength, but he has moments of lassitude followed by gaiety caused by over excitement of the nerves. Gradually the brain weakens and the most obstinate will is annihilated. Then the person can be led like a child; and then whatever he is wanted to do, and see as white that which is red. There is a period of stupidity, followed sooner or later by a fainting fit."

Rabiot turned pale. Loriot started toward the cupboard to replace the flask.

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