

THE MILL MYSTERY

BY ANNA KATHARINE GREEN.

advancing with an excuse for his interference, he spoke a few low words to Guy. The latter gravely bowed, and with just a slight glance in my direction, immediately left the room. I was once more alone with Dwight Pollard.

He seemed to feel the situation as much as I did, for it was several moments before he spoke, and when he did, his voice had a subdued tremor in it which I had not noticed before.

"Miss Sterling," he remarked, "my brother has been talking to you, trying, I presume, to explain to you the distressing scene to which you have just been witness."

"I bowed, for I seemed to have no words to say, though he evidently longed to hear me speak."

"My brother is not always considerate in his manner of address," he went on, after a moment's silent scrutiny of my face. "I hope he has not made you feel other than satisfied of our good will towards you."

"No," I faintly smiled, wishing I knew what feeling prompted this, and the attempt to learn the nature of the interview which had just passed. "Mr. Guy Pollard has never been anything but polite to me."

"He looked at me again as if he would read my very soul, but I gave him no help in his understanding, and he presently dropped his eyes."

"Did he tell you," he at last resumed, with some effort, "that it is our wish for you to remain in this house till our mother is buried?"

so secret of my intentions at the supper-table, and for the reason that neither of the brothers had ventured upon any reply to my remark, I expected one, if not both, of them to join me on the way. But I reached the last turn of the path without meeting any one, and I was congratulating myself upon the prospect of having an hour of perfect freedom, when I detected, leaning on the gate before me, the firm, well-knit figure of a man.

As the two Pollards were more or less alike in form, I could not distinguish at first glance which of the brothers it was. I therefore fattered back a step, and was indeed debating whether I should not give up my project and return to the house, when I saw the gentleman's head turn, and realized it was too late to retreat. I therefore advanced with as much calmness as I could assume, determined not to vary my conduct, no matter which of the brothers it should turn out to be. But, to my great surprise, the gentleman before me gave me no opportunity to test my resolution. No sooner did he perceive me than he made a hurried gesture that I did not at that moment understand, and, just lifting his hat in courteous farewell, vanished from my sight in the thick bushes which at that place encumbered the ground.

"It was Dwight," I murmured, "I alternately explained to myself, and knew not whether it would give me most relief to find myself shunned by one or the other. My final conclusion, that I wished to have nothing further to do with either of them, received, notwithstanding, a rude shock when I arrived at the gate-post. For there, on its iron top, lay a magnificent blossom, the choicest fruit of the hot-house, and it was to beg my acceptance of this that the gentleman had made the peculiar gesture I had noticed—an act which, if it came from Dwight, certainly possessed a significance which I was not yet ready to ignore; while, if it proceeded from his cold and crafty brother, it would not allow myself to dwell upon that possibility. The flower must be mine, and if afterwards I found that it was to Guy I owed its possession, it would be time enough then for me to determine what to do. So I took the gorgeous blossom of the post and was speeding away down the street, when I was suddenly stopped by the thought that only Guy would have the egotism to bestow a gift upon me in this way; that Dwight, if he had wished to present it at all, would have done so with his own hand, and not left it lying on a gate-post with the assurance it would be gathered up by the fortunate recipient of his favor."

Disgusted with myself, and instantly alive to the possible consequences of my act, I opened my fingers with the laudable intention of dropping the flower to the ground, when I saw standing in the road directly in front of me the beautiful idiot boy whose peculiarities of appearance and conduct had so attracted my attention in the summer-house the day before. He was looking at me with a strange gaze of mingled curiosity and intellect good-nature, and his hands, white as milk, trembled in the air before him, as if he could scarcely restrain himself from snatching out of my grasp the superb flower I seemed so willing to throw away.

A happy impulse seized me. "Here," said I, proffering him the blossom. "This will give you more pleasure than it will me."

But, to my great astonishment, he turned on his heel with a loud laugh, and then, shaking his head, and rolling it curiously from side to side, exclaimed, with his usual repetition: "No, no, it is a lover's gift, a lover's gift; you will wear it in your hair." And he danced about me with grotesque gyrations for a moment, then flitted away to a position from which he could still see me without being within reach of my hand.

Under these circumstances I was too proud to fling the flower away; so I dropped it into a basket I held, and walked swiftly down the street. The idiot boy followed me; now skipping a pace or two in advance, and now falling back till I had passed far beyond him. As he flashed back and forth, I say that his eyes were always on my face, and once, as I confronted him with mine, he broke out into a series of chuckles, and cried: "Do they like you now? do they like you now?" and laughed and danced, and laughed again, till I began to find the situation somewhat embarrassing, and was glad enough when at the corner of a street he disappeared from my view, with the flourish of: "One day, two days; wait till you have been there ten; wait till you have been there twenty!"

Hot and trembling with apprehension, lest his foolish speech had been heard by some passer-by, I hurried on my way to the house where I lived. I reached it in a few minutes, and being so fortunate as to find my landlady in, succeeded before another half-hour had passed in learning all that was generally known about the serious occurrences in which I was just then so profoundly interested.

I heard first that the vat in the old mill had been examined for the purpose of ascertaining how it came to be full enough of water to drown a man; and it was found that, owing to a heavy storm which had lately devastated the country, a portion of the wall above the vat had been broken in by a falling tree, allowing the rain to enter in floods from a jutting portion of the roof. Next, that although an inquest had been held over Mr. Barrows' remains, and a verdict been given of accidental death, the common judgment of the community ascribed his end to suicide. This was mainly owing to the fact that the woman in whose house he had lived had testified to having observed a great change in his appearance during the last few weeks; a change which many were now ready to allow they had themselves perceived; though, from the fact of his having escaped the attention of Ade, I cannot but think they were greatly helped to this conclusion by their own imagination.

tioned was rather the result of the petty felt in her commanding manner and position, than from any personal liking for the woman herself.

As for the case, they were few young men in their way, and the sympathy of everybody in their favor; but, but, if it had been itself with their names at all, was much more interested in wondering what disposition they would make of the property now coming to them, than in inquiring whether or not they could have had any secret relations with the man now dead, which were calculated to explain in any way his mysterious end.

Finally I learned that Ade and Mr. Barrows were to be buried the next day. Satisfied with the information obtained, I started immediately for the Pollard mansion. It was my wish to re-enter it before dark. But the twilight fell fast, and by the time I reached the gate, I could barely discern that a masculine figure was again leaning there, waiting, as it appeared, for my return. The discovery caused me a sensation of relief. Now I should at least learn which of these two brothers showed this interest in my movements, for this time the gentlemen showed no disposition to leave at my approach; on the contrary, he advanced, and in the mellow accents I had learned in so short a time to listen for, observed:

"I knew you wished to go alone, Miss Sterling, or I should have offered you my protection in your diurnal walk. I am glad to see you return before it is quite dark."

"Thank you," I responded, with almost a degree of joyousness in my tone, I was so glad to be rid of the perplexity that had weighed down my spirits for the last half-hour. "It is not pleasant to walk the streets at dusk alone, but necessity has accustomed me to it, and I scarcely think of its dangers now."

"You utter that in a proud tone," he declared, reaching out and taking the basket that hung on my arm. "I have reason to say," I replied, glad it was so dark he could not see the blush which his action had caused. "It was no slight struggle for me to overcome certain prejudices which I have been reared. That I have been able to do so gives me wholesome satisfaction. I am no longer ashamed to own that I stand by myself, and work for every benefit I obtain."

"Nor need you be," he murmured. "In this age and in this country a woman like you forfeits nothing by maintaining her own independence. On the contrary, she gains something, and that is the respect of every true-hearted man that knows her." And his step lagged more and more in spite of my conscientious efforts to maintain the brisk pace in which I had indulged before I had encountered him at the gate.

"This is a grand old place," I remarked, vaguely anxious to change the drift of the conversation. "Yes," he answered moodily; "but it is shadowed." And with a sudden relapse into his most sombre self, he walked at my side in silence till the light of the high porch showing itself through the trees warned him that he had any thing further to say to me; it must be said soon. He therefore paused, forcing me by the action to pause too, and earnestly observed: "I know, however you may address me, Miss Sterling, you cherish a doubt of me in your heart. I cannot resent this, much as my natural pride might prompt me to do so. During the short time in which I have known you, you have seen me deeply upon my esteem, that the utmost which I feel able to ask of you under the circumstances is, that in the two or three days you will yet remain with us, you will allow yourself but one thought concerning me, and that is, that I aspire to be an honest man, and to do not only what the world thinks right, but even what such a conscientious soul as yours must consider so. Are you willing to regard me in this light, and will my mere word be sufficient to cause you to do so?"

It was a searching question after his proffer, and my acceptance of the flower I held concealed, and I hesitated a moment before replying to it. I am so intensely proud; and then I could not but acknowledge to myself that, whatever my excuse, I was certainly running a risk of no ordinary nature in listening to the address of a man who could inspire me, or ever had inspired me, with the faintest element of distrust. He noted my silence and drew back, uttering a sigh that was half impatient and half sorrowful. I felt this sigh, nondescript as it was, re-echoed painfully in my heart, and he was in my mind in remorse; but not before I had caught a glimpse of his face, and been struck by its expression of deep melancholy.

BROUGHT TO A CLOSE.

Events Marking the Termination of the Reign of Terror.

the Hôtel de Ville. When the soldiers of the convention besieged the building and were on the point of capturing it, Robespierre, being the inevitable result, shot himself dead; but his death was not the end of his life. He was shot by the dictator, whose bullet had only fractured his jaw.

Harriet and young Robespierre tried to commit suicide by hurling themselves out of the window. The stone sagging wounded them sorely; nevertheless, they were dragged to the great fold, shuddering eight, hurrying to behold the bleeding and the dying, and then to the very grave; and yet common enough in that boiling his- tory of human passion. St. Just was on this occasion, who had from the assault on the Bastille been clamorous for blood, and in whose name all the frightful excesses had been committed. Consonant with their an- nouncement the influence of the better, the more intelligent classes, so long suppressed, began to revive along with law and order. Immur- recitions, more or less formidable, owing to scarcity of provisions and lack of employ- ment, not less than to the agitation and schemes of the defeated leaders, broke out at intervals, threatening a return of the former horrors. They were overpowered, however, after sharp conflict; but in the uprising of May 30, 1793, the convention was temporarily driven from its hall. The mob had been de- prived of its power, though not of its fury, by the events of the 9th Thermidor; its sar- cage triumphs could not be repeated. The conservative deputies who had fled or been banished gradually returned to Paris.

In a few months, the convention, aided by the wholesale reaction, adopted a new constitu- tion—bearing date of the year III—provid- ing for two legislative bodies, the council of five hundred and the council of ancient, num- bering two hundred and fifty. The Jacobin club, the focus of radicalism from its founda- tion, was closed Nov. 12, which indicated the strength and permanence of the social and political change. The attempts to reorganize it proved abortive, altered times and cir- cumstances rendering reorganization impossi- ble. Going back a short, many happenings need to be recorded. Tallien, head of the Thermi- dorian, as they were named, who had brought about the downfall of the triumvirate, be- came, for awhile, one of the most potent and successful men in the country. Possessed of ability and boldness he seems to have been unprincipled. He turned as much against

the ultraists as he had been in their favor, totally contradicting his antecedents, on ac- count of his personal interests. Robespierre's distrust of him had been well based. He was not, like so many of his associates, an enthu- siast and idealist. He caused the arrange- ment of Carrig, of whose cruelties at Nantes we have spoken in a previous article, of Le Bon and Fouchier-Tinville, and they were guillotined.

Le Bon, a native of Arras, was originally a priest and professor of rhetoric at Besan- con. A democrat by conviction, he welcomed the Revolution, soon became a constitutional curate, and was one of the first of his order to marry. This act was regarded as a proof of patriotism, and of attachment to the principles of the new era. He was chosen to the legislative assembly; made a member of the committee of public safety, and was sent on various important missions into seditious districts and those invaded by foreign foes. He bore himself with marked credit and displayed unusual courage.

His memory has been bitterly assailed, especially by the church; but many of the stories told of his disparagement have been disproved. Armand Guffroy, a fellow town- man and, like him, a mountaineer (mon- tagnard), and a member of the Jacobins, was his unrelenting foe, hunting him to death. Guffroy, who appears to have been as treach- erous as he was unscrupulous and cruel, had a visible motive for his persecution beyond his general malignity. Le Bon, who was executed at 30, had the reputation of an ex- emplary husband, a tender father, a steadfast friend.

Fouchier-Tinville has been portrayed in a worse light than even Marie or Robespierre, and there is reason to think that much of his reported infamy is merited. But, as usually happens, he has been blamed for things of which he was not guilty, and it is always comforting to know that humanity is never totally depraved. Having acted throughout the Terror as public accuser of the revolu- tionary tribunal, he is accused of the most cold blooded apathy, declared incapable of friendship, sympathy or the slightest ap- proach to human feeling. His contempora- ries asserted that he had no soul, not even the soul of a tiger, which seems to be grati- fied with what it devours. He is charged with sending to the scaffold, with equal in- difference, his political enemies and his po- litical enemies, Bailly and Vergniaud, Cham- mette and Danton, Hébert and Desmoulins, Philippe, duke of Orleans (surnamed Egalité) and Charlotte Corday, Robespierre and Marie Antoinette.

This office would naturally make him execr- able; but, apart from that, he seems to have been strangely devoid of sensibility. Nevertheless, he is known to have done frequent acts of kindness, not to have been par- ticularly disolute, not to have taken bribes, not to have been in any sense a peltroon. At the end he was poorer than when he first took part in the popular rebellion, and he was un- der a republican democracy from the be- ginning. He held at his trial that he had simply been the ax of the Revolution, and that he could not see why the ax should be punished.

This was deliberately going to meet death, for he and the other accused had been out- lined. At the time of the attack on the Hôtel he was carried off by a friend, and in the riot and confusion was lost sight of.

Having been discovered by some excited, infuriated men, ill and bleeding on one of the quays of the Seine, they were about to throw him into the river. He mildly said to them: "Wait a little, my good friends, I am not yet quite dead." But a few hours later he was bled with the rest, in his 38th year. Owing to the contortion of his limbs he could not be stretched as usual on the plank be- neath the ax, and the executioner put him to much needless pain by trying to adjust his deformed body so as to receive the fatal blow. Coutouan was as eager to encounter death as to inflict it on those he believed to be ene- mies of the republic and the era of emanci- pation. His yearning for humanity, for the liberation of the people, drove him, as it drove so many revolutionary leaders, to mortal hatred of all political opponents, ac- companied by a vehement desire to destroy them. So strange a blending of humanity and inhumanity in the interests of liberalism, is unprecedented in the annals of mankind.

With the Terror ended the despotism of the commonly, including the drags of the Paris- ian people, who had from the assault on the Bastille been clamorous for blood, and in whose name all the frightful excesses had been committed. Consonant with their an- nouncement the influence of the better, the more intelligent classes, so long suppressed, began to revive along with law and order. Immur- recitions, more or less formidable, owing to scarcity of provisions and lack of employ- ment, not less than to the agitation and schemes of the defeated leaders, broke out at intervals, threatening a return of the former horrors. They were overpowered, however, after sharp conflict; but in the uprising of May 30, 1793, the convention was temporarily driven from its hall. The mob had been de- prived of its power, though not of its fury, by the events of the 9th Thermidor; its sar- cage triumphs could not be repeated. The conservative deputies who had fled or been banished gradually returned to Paris.

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