

A GREAT SECRET, OR, SHALL IT BE DONE.

CHAPTER XIV.

The sitting-room into which Madeline de Lancry led her visitor was the same in which she had received Victor two days before. Mr. Smith glanced round him at the furniture, which was somewhat spare and unpretending, and then at the diamonds in the lady's ears, in unconcealed astonishment.

"You don't seem particularly well lodged, for such a fine lady as you have become," he suggested as an opening.

"His own taste lay in the direction of plenty of glass and gilding, and he liked his colors bright.

"My husband and I find the rooms comfortable enough," said she carelessly.

"Ah, yes, so you've got another husband—I mean you've married since I saw you last. I read it in the papers. I'm sure I hope he suits you pretty well."

"Perfectly, thank you. He is an invalid, and I only see him when I wish to do so."

"Hullo!" And Smith, who was fidgeting round the room, stopped short and stared at her. "You've got on, haven't you, since—"

"Since you gave me my first lesson in the duties of a wife? Yes."

He gave her one sidelong look out of his round black eyes, like a convicted goblin, and then continued his aimless promenade round the room, while Madeline sat down in an armchair and took off her fur cape.

When he drew near to the side of the room where she was sitting he stopped, looked at himself in the glass, and carefully smoothed down with his no-tuft clean hand a little feather-like tuft of wiry black hair which always stood out from the crown of his head unsubdued by the rarely applied comb.

Then he laughed with some effort as he spoke again.

"You always were a rum un, Madeline, and at the best of times one never knew where to have you. But this beats all—that it does." And he laughed again.

"I don't quite understand," said she.

"Why, to go and marry a swell quite regular, with license and cake and everything in style, knowing all the while that there was a poor devil knocking about somewhere whom you'd promised to love, honor, and obey in Islington church half a score of years before."

He put it quite plaintively, but Madeline only laughed in her turn; and, with some fear of a woman's foolish fancy for raking up old sores, he added quickly: "But there, I know I was a bit hasty and irritable at times—we all are, more or less; and of course you were very natural that you should feel it, and such a fine looking woman as you were—and as you are still, for the matter of that. And I'm not one to make a fuss over every trifling irregularity. But—but—to ask your first husband to step in, in a friendly way, and have a chat, just as if nothing had happened, in the very house where your second husband is nursing himself in security, why—why, it shows a positive want of delicacy, Madeline, that it does."

And Mr. Smith, *alias* Meredith, pulled out his handkerchief and passed it over his forehead; for injured delicacy had made him warm.

"I'm so sorry you think that," said Madeline, leaning back in her chair, and drawing a footstool toward her. "But perhaps you will forgive me when I tell you that nothing is further from my thoughts than to talk to you just as if nothing had happened. I wanted to speak to you because a lot of extremely strange things have happened since I had the pleasure of promising to love, honor, and obey you in Islington church, and because I want to know just what share you, and a certain gentleman whose name I don't think I need mention, have had in bringing those strange things about."

At the words "certain gentleman" Mr. Smith grew suddenly quite quiet, and successfully abstracted every trace of expression from his round face.

"I shall be very happy to give you any information in my power, but I haven't the least idea who the mysterious 'certain gentleman' is."

"Well, we won't waste any time over that. The gentleman I mean is your accomplice, Louis de Breteuil. Now you know quite well that I'm not afraid of you, so what is the use of going through all that silly pantomime?" she asked calmly, as Meredith began to dance, and to make little threatening runs at her. "I know that you two are still linked together; I know that he is still living luxuriously in Paris on the proceeds of your combined knaveries; I know that you have for some years filled the post of traveller for the firm of Fournier & Breteuil in order to veil your robberies, and to give you opportunities for more; I know that the railway robbery was your work—"

"Then if you know so much, what the deuce is there you want to know more?" interrupted Meredith, whose eyes, as round and black as a toad's, were now shining out of a moist red face, as he stood watching her cruel mouth in terror.

"I want to know why Mr. Shaw was murdered?"

"Good gracious!"

The very mildness of this exclamation, in the face of such a terrible implied accusation, was an emphatic protest against the injustice of it.

"After such a haul as you made by the robbery of Blair's £12,000, the comparatively trifling amount which a prudent man like this poor Mr. Shaw would have had about him cannot have had much attraction for either of you. I am sure that robbery was not your object; I want to know what was."

As she took not the least notice of his expressions of indignant astonishment, Meredith suddenly changed his tone, drew forward a chair, and, seating himself in front of her, put his spectacles on his nose and his hands on his knees, and examined her face, with his head tilted back, and a look of genial amusement on his face.

"It's too funny, simply too funny," said he at last, when his efrontery had had its intended effect of making Madeline impatient and restless. "Here's a good lady who has married three gentlemen in succession, without troubling herself about the fact that two of these unions were illegal; then, when she comes across the original and only genuine husband, she thinks herself entitled to bring him to book." He drew his chair a little nearer to her, and continued,

wagging his head from side to side as he spoke, in a particularly irritating manner: "Now look here, our days of connubial bliss are over, and so is your right to henpeck me. It isn't likely I'm going to tell tales out of school to please you at this time of day. And if I were to confess to you that I'd murdered"—he shuddered at the word—"half the stockbrokers in Europe, it wouldn't do a bit of good, except to satisfy your idle curiosity, a wife can't witness against her husband. And you are my wife, Madame de What-you-may-call'em, and I've only got to open my mouth to have you up for bigamy, so there!"

"But you won't do that; it would take a stronger inducement than that to make you appear in a court of justice in any character."

"All right, all right; perhaps it would. But now, aren't you a silly woman to go poking your nose into things that don't concern you in the least, when the very best thing that can happen to you is to be entirely forgotten by—by certain people in whose affairs you seem determined to meddle? You've heard the proverb 'Let sleeping dogs lie,' and if you had heard certain words which—which certain people made use of in Paris ten years ago, when you turned so unaccountably nasty, I think you would see the advantage of leaving well alone."

"Did you ever hear the words I made use of on that occasion?"

"Oh yes, the nonsense a sensible woman will speak in a passion, and be ashamed of when she comes to herself."

This particularly unwise speech made Madeline's cheeks glow and her eyes flash.

"Exactly," she assented, speaking under strong self-restraint. "But as even a sensible woman may object to see crimes committed with impunity under her very nose, I shall call upon Mr. Beresford, and put him in possession of certain facts in the history of his confidential clerk."

This blow struck home. Meredith jumped up with a deep-drawn breath, and his fist raised in exasperation, which, however was more comical than alarming; to Madeline who only looked up and nodded calmly, as an assurance that she was in earnest.

"If you do—" he growled; and he stopped and looked in her face with most careful scrutiny. Then, as if satisfied, he dropped his fist and sat down again.

"You think I don't mean what I say; but you are mistaken. Or perhaps you fancy that your credit is so good with Mr. Beresford that he will believe nothing against you? There I think you are mistaken against your employer is a selfish, avaricious man, willing to shut his eyes to irregularities on your part which don't concern him and his business. But commercial smartness is not the same thing as robbery preceded by murder; and if Mr. Beresford were once to understand that you had had a hand in the death of Mr. Shaw—"

"Before God, Madeline, I had not!" burst out the little man, who was by this time shaking his head to foot. "I had nothing to do with it—I knew nothing about it. I was shocked. It came upon me like a thunderbolt. O Madeline, you've seen the worst of me; now be honest, was I ever cruel?"

He had risen and was leaning against the rail of the chair he had occupied, bending over it, and speaking with most genuine earnestness and anxiety. Madeline did not look at him, but her mouth quivered. Something in his pleading voice, his momentary sincerity, recalled the old days of their brief married life together, his impulsive remorse after some one of his numerous backslidings, the difficulty she used to feel in assuming for a few minutes that hardness which was now her natural attitude to all the world. She sprang up, walked quickly to one of the two windows, threw it open, and looked out at the masts and funnels of the ships that lined the quay. It was a dark, dull night, and the wind was rising. Meredith followed her to the window, and as she turned suddenly, she found herself so close to him that she uttered a hoarse cry. Before she could pass he put out his hands to detain her, and, shrinking with disgust from his touch, she stopped.

"Madeline, you must believe this—I will have you believe this," he said, dropping from his voice and manner the crust of coarseness, which, at first assumed as an affection, was now the result of years of companionship with his inferiors in education. "There is only one of the commandments I've never broken, I've never helped to break: I've never lifted my hand against any man's life. And there is one oath I've kept and mean to keep; and that is to stand by the man who stood by me. Not much to take pride in, I daresay you think. But one creed is as good as another if you stick to it, and that's mine. And if you tell me to old Beresford you'll simply lose him a good clerk and take away from me the one honest occupation I've got, which I might have settled down to entirely one of these days. And as for hurting Louis de Breteuil by this slapdash sort of accusation, it's like catching a bird by putting salt on its tail. To rush about and proclaim that a certain man is a murderer won't hang him, my dear."

"No; if it were so easy as that the excitement wouldn't be strong enough to be worth the trouble."

And the flexible red mouth, so passionate, so changeable in the old days, became straight with the horrible resolution of a sensual nature grown hard and cruel. Meredith absolutely shivered as he looked at her.

"And do you—do you mean to—tell me," he stammered in a low voice, "that you—you would send a man to the gallows *pour passer le temps*?"

"Not quite that. But the most turbulent life is better than stagnation, and I am not sorry that chance has reminded me of an old grudge to be paid off by throwing me across the path of my creditors."

"One of them. If you were to come across the other you wouldn't get off so well. Look here, Madeline, you'd better get your husband to buy you a couple of new dresses, and forget all about me and—the other one. You let us alone and we'll let you alone. I don't want any harm to come to you, and I don't exactly know why, for your's is an indistinctive devil as ever I've met; but still, for the sake of—well, I don't exactly know what, for we never were very comfortable together, and I wonder, considering how you've turned out. Still, there's a spirit in you I like, and what I say to you is: Humbug about

here if you like, go and worry old Beresford, try to set my employers against me if you like—remember I've got the ear of both the money-grubbing old boys—but, for God's sake, don't try to meet De Breteuil. I'm only a human blackguard, but he is—the devil."

And Meredith took up from the table the shabby, low-crowned, curly brimmed, round hat, which was his habitual and most unbecoming headgear, nodded to Madeline in exactly the same awkward would-be careless manner with which, during their married life together, he used to leave her to go out in the evening—to see a man who got a tip," and opened the door. Halfway along the corridor he met a tall gentleman with a gray moustache, who stared at him, but in a manner too dignified to be called impertinent. Mr. Smith touched his hat to him and hurried out, wondering how Madeline would explain his own visit. "Old chap worships her, suppose; and he might be at the bottom of sea for what she cares; so might I. But De Breteuil—I'll be hanged if I know whether she isn't fond of him still. Queer creatures, women." These reflections lasted till he reached the platform, where he found that his train had gone; however, he started for Boulogne by the next, and it was some weeks before Mr. Smith again made his appearance in Calais or its neighborhood.

The ten days following the night of Mr. Shaw's murder were spent in investigating by the police, in arresting and releasing various persons who had no connection with the affair, and in interrogating all those people who had had any intercourse whatever with Mr. Shaw on the day of his death. Gerald, Mr. Beresford, and Mr. Smith, were the only people who could tell anything of importance; but the first was ill of concussion of the brain, the last had disappeared with the telegraphic excuse to his employers that urgent family affairs required his presence in England; so that Mr. Beresford's sensational announcement that the dead man had had in his possession a clue to the perpetrators of the robbery in the train was the only important piece of evidence forthcoming. Mr. Shaw's eldest son, a good-hearted young fellow with the manners of a groom, who had been most carefully educated without learning anything at all, came over to Calais to call at "Les Bouleaux" to see Mr. Beresford, and to take his father's body back to England when the inquest was over. He behaved very well, poor perplexed young man, looking dignified for the first time in his life as he stood, in his long travelling ulster, silenced by his grief and by his ignorance of the French language, listening by the hour to explanations and declarations by first one official and then another, none of whom could tell him more than he knew—that his father had been foully murdered, no one knew by whom. So he left a kind, indifferently spelt letter at the house of M. Fournier, to be given to Gerald as soon as he was better, and returned with his solemn freight to England. And there were more investigations, and more interrogatories, and at the end of a fortnight Gerald, having sufficiently recovered from his illness, had his evidence taken down and his careful description of the murderer. On being asked whether the face was like any one he had seen before, the young man at first hesitated, but finally said "No," and persisted in that answer.

But when, a fortnight after the murder, Madame de Lancry called to learn how he was, and finding him convalescent, broached the subject of that night's adventures, he was more communicative, and on her pressing him to be frank, he confessed that the face he had seen bending over him in the darkness had struck him by its likeness to Victor Fournier.

"It was only a likeness in the features, you understand, madame, and I think he was a much older man than Victor; but he had just the same type of thin aquiline features, and a small black moustache like Victor's."

Madame de Lancry looked at him, and listened attentively.

"Had you ever seen the man before?" she asked.

"Never, madame."

"Ah!" She got up and walked about the room, looking at the objects around her, glancing now and then at Gerald, whose languid interest in the matter under discussion, though scarcely surprising so soon after his illness, irritated and astonished her. At last she stopped in front of him, such a majestic figure in her trained gown of black brocade glistening with hanging drops of jet, that the pause she made before speaking rendered her slow, grave words doubly impressive.

"What would you say," she asked solemnly, "if I were to tell you that the object you hold dearest in life is intimately connected with the discovery of Mr. Shaw's murderer?"

Gerald started, and his face grew very white.

"Why, what has she to do with it? he faltered quickly, in a husky voice.

"She!" said Madame de Lancry, in a deep voice that sounded like distant thunder to the poor lad, who grew suddenly as red as he had been white, and hung his head, and flinched with a tassel of the sofa-cushion like a corrected child.

"I mean—I mean," said he, clearing his throat, "that I do not understand you, madame."

"You told me, not three weeks ago—but you very young men measure your constancy, your convictions, by minutes, I know," she interpolated scornfully—"that the one object of your life was to clear your father's name from the suspicion that hangs over it."

Gerald started again. "Yes, yes, so it is," he said quickly, his thin face burning and quivering with half a dozen strong and strange emotions as he heard her.

Madame de Lancry watched the sensitive and indignant face steadily, and said, in a low deep voice, the very tone of which kept him spellbound: "Find the murderer of Mr. Shaw—and you will have found the man who robbed and murdered your father."

The Boundary Line

Between comfort and discomfort is often very slight. Have you rheumatism or neuralgia? or are you a sufferer from obscure nervous pains? Why suffer longer? You can purchase for 10 cents a bottle of that king of pain—POLSON'S NERVINE, or you can get a large bottle for 25 cents. It cures promptly. It is sure, pleasant to take, and never fails to cure all kinds of pain. Don't wait an hour, but send to any drug store and get a trial bottle. Nervine the sure pain cure.

The shock of this declaration made to him while he was still weak from illness, was too much for Gerald. He looked up in her face quite steadily for a moment longer, and then his body fell forward, and he was only prevented by the quick clasp of her strong arms from falling to the floor. Her first impulse, even then, was indignant contempt at the weakness of a nature which was not braced up instead of shaken by a statement so overwhelming. But as she put her arm round the young man's shoulder, and laid his damp head back gently on to the cushions of the sofa, the old emotion of tenderness, which she had not now known for years, woke up in the woman's breast again, and she remembered the time when thoughts of love were foremost in her too.

"Poor boy!" she whispered kindly; and as she touched his hair with her lips with motherly gentleness the door opened and Victor came in.

He had just returned home from the factory, and, on hearing that Madame de Lancry was in the *salon* he had hurried to the room in eager haste, for his admiration for this somewhat inaccessible lady was increasing every day. Of course he affected not even to have seen her caressing attitude near Gerald, although she scarcely altered it on his entrance; but when she left, after a few remarks to Victor, in which she did not forget to congratulate him on his approaching marriage, the young Frenchman turned almost savagely to Gerald, and said disagreeably.

"She might have spared a little of her sympathy for me, linked as I shall be tomorrow to the most ill-tempered specimen of boldness and prudery your fog-smothered country has ever produced!"

Gerald looked hurt and angry, but he only said, "To-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow. Old Beresford is going to give a confounded betrothal-dinner, to tie us up by anticipation, you know; he has grown very solicitous since my aunt's death the other day."

This was an illusion to the fact that a rich widowed sister of M. Fournier's, a lady who had been for some years in delicate health, had died within the last week in the south of France, leaving the bulk of her property to her nephew Victor.

Gerald listened, but made no answer; and when, some few minutes later, Victor not finding him a lively companion, left him alone, he remained for some time in the attitude he had assumed on first hearing the news, leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped loosely together. Presently he got up with red eyes and tremulous lips, and walking unsteadily toward the mantelpiece, saw that it was three o'clock.

"There's lots of time for me to get there before they have dinner," he said to himself; "and of course I really ought to make some inquiries and bestir myself, after what Madame de Lancry said."

So he went in search of Madame Fournier, told her, with tears of gratitude in his eyes for her kindness, that he must go back to "Les Bouleaux" that day, and show Mr. Beresford that he was fit for work again—which he evidently was not—and started in a small hired omnibus within half an hour of making up his mind.

The drive was full of horrible reminiscences to him, but as he drew near to "Les Bouleaux" his agitation increased from another cause. Suddenly, within a few yards of the entrance to the avenue, he shouted to the driver to stop, and got out of the omnibus. For he had caught sight of a little dark figure that started forward out of the open gate to meet him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Nice Country to Live In.

It appears that during the year 1886 the number of persons killed by wild animals and venomous snakes in Hindoostan was 24,841. This is an increase of 1,035 over the figures for the previous year. The fatalities from snake bites rose from 20,142 to 22,134, while wild animals killed 2,707 persons as compared with 2,765 in 1885. Tigers were responsible for 928 deaths and wolves for 222, these figures showing 90 more deaths from tigers and 26 fewer from wolves as compared with the preceding year. Elephants, leopards, bears, hyenas, wild boars, bison, wild hogs, jackals, alligators, crocodiles, wild cats and panthers had also their quota of victims.

Can a Man Swallow a Cannon-ball?

Well, "that depends." He can if his throat is large enough and the cannon-ball not too large. The question really seems worthy of some consideration in view of the size of some of the pills that are prescribed for suffering humanity. Why not throw them "to the dogs," and take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets? Small, sugar-coated, purely vegetable, perfectly harmless, in glass, and always fresh.

That "Christmas comes but once a year" may be true, but when it comes on Sunday it seems to stay for about three days.

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That you cannot afford to neglect that catarrh? Don't you know that it may lead to consumption, to insanity, to death? Don't you know that it can be easily cured? Don't you know that while the thousand and one nostrums you have tried have utterly failed that Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy is a certain cure! It has stood the test of years, and there are hundreds of thousands of grateful men and women in all parts of the country who can testify to its efficacy. All druggists.

A short way of becoming proficient in the study of human nature is to examine yourself.

"I am weary of living," moaned poor Mrs. Black, "for I'm fully worn out with the pain in my back; my nerves are a chain."

Of weakness and pain, and my poor head is aching as if it would crack."

"New, don't be discouraged," cried good Mrs. White,

"It is never so dark but there's promise of light; I can tell you, in brief."

What will give you relief—Pierce's Favorite Prescription will soon set you right."

It is the only remedy for woman's peculiar weaknesses and ailments, sold by druggists, under a positive guarantee from the manufacturers, that it will give satisfaction in every case or money will be refunded. See guarantee on bottle wrapper. Large bottles (100 doses) \$1. Six for \$5.

Almost everyone who has commanded the attention of the world has owed part of his success to merit and part to a happy concurrence of circumstances in his favor.

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A Book of Instruction and Price List on Dyeing and Cleaning, to be had gratis by calling at any of our offices, or by post by sending your address to R. Parker & Co., Dyers and Cleaners, 759 to 763 Yonge St., Toronto. Branch Offices: 4 John St. N., Hamilton; 100 Colborne St., Brantford.

The highest nature is the one that has the most necessities, but the fewest of its own making.

People who are subject to bad breath, foul coated tongue, or any disorder of the stomach, can be relieved by using Dr. Carson's Stomach Bitters, the old and tried remedy. Ask your Druggist.

Nature has her revenge upon neglect as well as upon extravagance. Disease, with her, is as mortal a sin as abuse.

Hugh Cohen Cures in one minute.

"Killing time." Ah, what a sad occupation is that in a world in which there is so much to be learned, so much to be done!

CHANGING HAIR REGENERATOR restores grey and faded hair to its natural color and prevents falling out.

But for money and the need of it there would not be half the friendship in the world. It is powerful for good when divinely used.

Whenever your Stomach or Bowels get out of order, causing Biliousness, Dyspepsia, or Indigestion, and their attendant troubles, take at once a dose of Dr. Carson's Stomach Bitters. Best family medicine. All Druggists, 50 cents.

Few men do more harm than those who, taking the right side, dispute for personal victory, and argue, as they are sure then to do, ungenerously.

A Cure for Drunkenness.

The opium habit, dipsomania, the morphine habit, nervous prostration caused by the use of tobacco, wakefulness, mental depression, softening of the brain, etc., premature old age, loss of vitality caused by over-excitation of the brain, and loss of natural strength, from any cause whatever, Men—Young, old or middle aged—who are broken down from any of these causes, or any cause not mentioned above, send your address and 10 cents in stamps for Lubbock's Treatise, in book form, of Diseases of Man. Books sent sealed and secure from observation. Address M. V. LUBBOCK 47 Wellington Street East, Toronto Ont.

It matters not what the object is that a man aspires to be worthy of, and proposes as a model for imitation, if he does not believe it to be excellent.

Coff No More.

Watson's cough drops are the best in the world for the throat and chest, for the voice unequalled. See that the letters R. & T.W. are stamped on each drop.

An stamp, though of the greatest merit, is generally disagreeable, and a sentiment of envy commonly prevents us from heartily sympathizing with his joy.

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No. 21.

In order to increase our subscription list to one hundred thousand subscribers by the 1st day of July next we have decided to give away the above amount in prizes. To the four hundred and fifty-one persons first answering correctly on or before the 30th day of June next the questions, where in the Bible are the words BRASS and IRON first found? we will give the following rewards:

1st elegant Piano, by best maker in Canada. \$500
2nd cash in gold. \$200 4th cash in gold. 100
3rd cash in gold. \$150 5th cash in gold. 50
To the next 250 persons each a Ladies' fine gold watch valued at \$50. 1,250

To the next 50 persons each a Ladies' newest silver open face watch valued at \$20. 1,000
To the next 100 each a solid plated tea set, 4 precious stones valued as \$10. 1,000
To the next 200 each a silver plated napkin ring valued at \$2. 400

MIDDLE REWARDS.

To the four hundred persons whose names come in the middle, counting from number one to the last received, we will give the following rewards:

1st cash in gold. \$150 4th cash in gold. \$ 20
2nd cash in gold. \$75 5th cash in gold. 17
3rd cash in gold. \$50 6th cash in gold. 5
To the next 30 each a splendid sewing machine valued at \$20. 1740

To the next 31 each a solid plated tea set, 4 pieces, valued at \$50, by the best maker. 1,560
To the next 150 each a half dozen set dessert knives, extra silver plated. 900
To the next 185 each a solid gold ring, newest design, valued at \$3. 555

LAST REWARDS.

To those who are too late for any of the above rewards these special or last rewards are offered.

To the three hundred and ninety persons whose names come in last, we will give the following rewards:

To the last name on the list, cash. \$175
To the next to last name on list. 100
To the third from last name on list, cash. 50
To the next 10 each \$10 cash. 100
To the next 20 each \$5 cash. 100
To the next 50 each \$2 cash. 100
To the next 100 each \$1 cash. 100
To the next 199 each \$1 cash. 199

The questions must be answered correctly in order to secure any reward. Each competitor must send with the answers fifty cents by P. O. order or registered letter, (if in stamps three cents extra must be added for discount) for a three months' subscription to the *Ladies' Journal*, not a ladies fashion paper only, but a paper which will please every member of the family. The competition remains open till the 30th day of June inclusive, and letters wherever mailed, if they bear post mark of that date or earlier, will be eligible for a prize. Twenty days will be allowed for letters to reach us from distant places. Nearly two hundred thousand persons have received rewards in previous competitions. Address and make all orders payable to Editor LADIES' JOURNAL, Toronto, Canada.