THE MYSTERY CLEARED UP;

OR, THE HERITAGE OF MADAME YALTA.

CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd)

He had received encouraging news; her strength was returning, the fever had disappeared, and with the aid of rest it might be hoped the convalescent would soon be in a condition to receive her friends.

Maxime was beside himself for joy, and as joy predisposes the heart to sympathize with the happiness of others, the idea occurred to him to pass by Rue de Suresnes and have a talk with Jules Vignory.

The sky was serene once more and the air soft. He directed his steps toward the residence of his uncle, thinking as he did so of the strange course which events sometimes take in this world of ours.

Six weeks before, an attempted robbery had thrown him on a path which he had followed up with ardor, and which through a succession of unforeseen incidents had led him to make the acquaintance of an adorable woman, by the side of whom Mme. Sergent was simply an ordinary beauty. And now he had completely forgotten the severed hand, Robert de Carnoel, the brunette of the Rink, to think only of this countess whom he had but slightly known during one snowy day, but of whom he still kept a burning memory. He could scarcely even recall distinctly her features, and sometimes she seemed to have appeared to him in a dream. But the shadowy image haunted him, and he was impatient to have it assume once more form and substance.

The rest mattered little to him now. Vignory was happy, and Alice was cured of a senseless passion. They were approaching with full sails the tranquil port of marriage, which everything indicated they would soon enter.

The door was kept partially open during the hours when the public was admitted to the grating, and Maxime entered without meeting any one. It was necessary to pass through a vaulted passage way in order to come out on the court, and then turn to the right to reach the offices. It wa sthere that the friends had come in collision with two individuals of doubtful appearance, who had quickly passed into the street five minutes before the discovery of the theft. Evidently the authors of the attempt had passed by them then, and one of these audacious robbers must have been a woman disguised as a man, the woman for whom he had so vainly sought.

The incident now came back to him, and for the first time since he had undertaken the pursuit of the rogues it passed before his mind that the tall one might have been the man of Rue Jouffroy—the same height, same figure. But the woman dressed as a man could not be Madame Sergent, for Madame Sergent had both her hands.

"All these bore but a subordinate part in the performance," thought Maxime: "they acted on behalf of some one who has not yet been detected. The bear belonged to the first expedition, when the woman left her hand on the field of battle; he was also of the second, and the woman was not, her wound confining her to her hospital. Afterward the bear despatched the brunette to obtain the bracelet from me by soft devices. But how could they know I was going that day to see the skating on rollers? Mystery! . . . like all the rest. But it is certain he knew it. The rascals who followed me were acting under his orders in the event of Madame Sergent failing. At the Varietes this pretty couple began again and I fell into the trap; but I can laugh them all to scorn. Au diable! the bracelet, Blue Beard, the false Andalusian, the one-handed, the scamp of high degree who suborns all these subaltern scamps —and Vive la Comtesse Yalta!"

On arriving at the lodge he found the glass door partly open, and in the midst of a cloud of tobacco-smoke saw three men seated before a fire, their backs turned toward him. He recognized the concierge, the valet de chambre, Joseph, and Malicome, the watch. His first impulse was to call to account these fellows, who were converting the lodge into a smoking-room, but he was restrained by a sentence that met his ear.

"I tell you again," said Joseph, "that the secretary is as innocent as you or I."

"Then what did he run away for?" asked father Doulevant.

"Because the old one didn't want him to marry mademoiselle: but I'll lay my life on it he didn't touch the safe."

Maxime was astounded. The theft, then, was known to the servants in spite of all the precautions taken to conceal it.

"But if the pretty secretary is innocent, why don't anybody hear from him?"

"There are some as have heard," replied Joseph, with an important air. "But it is true nothin's been heard for a month, and about that I has my notions—it's because he's been sent to his grave."

"What! you believe they've killed him?"

"I am as certain of it as that is a well-blackened pipe."

"Who is there would have killed him?"

"Those he stood in the way of."

"Come, now, he has most likely taken ship for America, but I don't believe he's stolen. And do you want to know who has? It's the little groom."

"Georget? It ain't possible. I ain't over-fond of the little crab, for he's several times played me tricks passing by my lodge; but I'd never have believed he'd touch the safe. First, he didn't stop in the offices after six in the evening."

"No, but he was a cat. I caught him one morning asleep on a table. He said I'd shut him up the evening before without seeing him. He might have laid in the closet the evening of the robbery.'

"If he did, he did it on account of other people. And if he's been three-fourths murdered in the street it's because there's people as want to put him out of the way, as they did Carnoel, who must have known something too."

"And Vignory didn't lose any time taking his place and courting Mlle. Alice. It's true he's permitted by the patron. But the poor little thing don't look much like getting married. She cries all the evening; the femme de chambre told me so."

"Bah! she'll be consoled," said Malicome. "And a nice thing it'll be for the cashier. He came here without a sou, and will die in the skin of a millionaire.'

"It's not that'll make him generous. Since I've known him I haven't found out the color of his money."

Maxime felt inclined to enter the lodge Tartar fashion and use his cane on these gossips, but he concluded it would not be well to commit himself, and so passed on unobserved.

Nothing is more instructive than the conversation of servants when their masters are in a position to be benefited by it, without their knowledge. One may learn many things of which he would otherwise remain ignorant, when the reverse side of servile platitudes is revealed Maxime was acquainted with the class, and was not surprised at the liberty of speech in which they indulged, in such little gatherings as this; but certain words that he had heard still rang in his ears. The settled conviction of the majority of the lodge was that the secretary had been unjustly accused, and that Georget was concerned in the theft.

"If it should be true!" thought Maxime. "In that case I have been guilty of two blunders: first, in assuring my cousin that her lover was unworthy of her; and secondly, in interesting myself in this little scamp who has been the cause of all the trouble. Yes, but it is not true. This rascal Joseph regrets the pourboires with which M. de Carnoel rewarded him for transmitting clandestine messages to Alice, and that was enough to induce him to hand over to him letters-patent of innocence. No matter, when I see the countess I shall ask her if she is certain of her protege."

Pushing open the door of the wanting-room, he entered the office, where he found Vignory writing a letter. He was radiant and almost ready to throw himself into the arms of Maxime, stage fashion, but the presence of the clerks moderated these transports, and he led the nephew of his patron into a little room adjoining the office — a temporary receptacle for old papers which, since his change of fortune, Vignory had fitted up for the purpose of isolating himself at times from his subordinates. Taking care to close the door, he seized Maxime's two hands and pressed them warmly."

"It is true, then," said the nephew, sufficiently enlightened by this demonstration, "you are to be my cousin?"

"What! you know, then—"

"I know nothing, but I guess all. Your face is triumphant."

"I am the happiest of men."

"Dispense with these appropriate phrases and tell me simply what has occurred."

"That will not take very long. I dined at your uncle's—a family dinner. We were four, M. Dorgeres, Mlle. Alice—"

"Mme. Martineau and you. Parbleu! if you enter so into particulars you will never get through."

"Well, after dinner your uncle was absorbed in reading the statutes of a new financial company, Madame Martineau had gone to sleep in the corner of the fire, so we found ourselves tete-a-tete, Mlle. Alice and I"

"And you seized the occasion to make an ardent declaration?"

"I was going to try, but Mlle Alice did not give me time to speak. She said to me: 'M. Vignory, I know you love me and I appreciate your good qualities. On a recent occasion you showed that you had a heart, for you undertook the defence of an unfortunate friend. I esteem you, and know that my father wishes me to marry you. I authorize you to ask of him my hand.'"

"Hum! here is a consent very lacking in euthusiasm. What was your reply to this frank and moderate discourse?"

"I cannot tell—I was so agitated."

"Good! some disconnected phrases, protestations of gratitude — eternal devotion—I think I understand. But finally you accepted?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"No; you are rational enough to make a rational marriage."

"Of reason and inclination too. I have worshipped her for two years without daring to say so."

"You are not the only one."

At these words Vignory colored slightly, and Maxime, who never disguised his thoughts, resumed:

"Do not suppose I wish to discourage you. My little cousin is sincere when she says she esteems you; I am even inclined to believe that she will end by loving you, and that you will one day be the most cherished of husbands. But do not forget that she has loved passionately a man whom she would have married but for untoward circumstances. Your position is a delicate one."

"I know it, but it does not frighten me."

"So much the better. In your place I should be a little jealous of the past. And there are moments when I feel disposed to ask if M. de Carnoel has not been unjustly accused."

This time the cashier turned pale.

"If he were innocent he would have appeared," he murmured.

"At least, if he be not dead."

"Dead! why should you suppose—"

"In passing by the lodge just now I caught a few very singular remarks. Joseph and Malicome believe that Robert has been murdered."

"It is absurd. He has left France beyond a doubt."

"Are you sure? I saw him in Paris eight days after the theft; and then he suddenly disappeared. It is not natural."

"On the contrary, it is all very clear. He went first to Brittany, and after remaining there two or three days, returned here. Col. Borisoff can prove it. But what are you driving at?"

"To say to you, my dear Jules, that all this affair of the theft does not yet seem clear to me, and I begin to think the real culprits have not yet been suspected. For instance, it never entered our minds that it could be Georget; but the servants maintain that it was."

"Georget! your protege whom you recommended so warmly to M. Dorgeres?"

"Oh, I don't answer for the assertions of these messieurs, but it is plain that the rogues had some communication with the house. Georget went and came incessantly here. Might he not have hidden somewhere, and opened the door to the rogues at a moment when no one was about?"

"Why bring up all this sad story?" asked Vignory, in an agitated voice; "I made a fete day of the announcement of my marriage to you, and hoped you would sympathize with my joy; instead of doing so, you talk only of a young man who was my friend, whom I defended as long as I could, but for whose return it is impossible for me to wish."

"Pardon me," cried Maxime, touched by this appeal to his feelings, "I am a fool. Du diable! if I know why I interest myself in these people. All's well that ends well, and I am delighted that you are to marry Alice. When will the ceremony take place?"

"M. Dorgeres proposes the first of February."

"Then I have no time to lose in selecting my bridal present, and I give you my word of honor to talk no more of M. de Carnoed."

(To be continued.)

STRINGING.

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On the Farm

A SERIES OF QUESTIONS

Why is it, when the proof is overwhelming, that the heifers from a registered bull are worth a third more in the cow market, that a graded-up herd is twice as productive in milk, that a great majority of farmers owning cows, with eyes in their heads to see these things, will still persist in using a cheap grade or scrub bull worth possibly for beef $25 or $30?

Why is it, with proof on every hand to confirm it, that it is worth while to feed a good cow all she will eat of a well-balanced ration with milk, butter and cheese at present prices; that you will find a host of farmers who believe that they will lose money if they feed such a cow a liberal grain ration?

Why is it, when any common mind could easily reason to it that a cow needs just as good air as the men and women do, that farmers shut up a stable of cows with all their manures and urine about them, w thout a supply of fresh air and proceed deliberately to poison their cows to death?

Why is it, when it must be apparent before their eyes every day, that the farmers who are most intelligent are the most prosperous, that so large a proportion of men who keep cows will not read or take any pains to inform themselves on this dairy question? Why do such men prefer to be ignorant rather than intelligent?

Why is it, that, when thousands upon thousands of farmers use silos and declare constantly that the silo is a money-mtking thing, it is so hard to convince a large portion of other farmers that it would be a wise thing for them if they built a silo?

Why is it, that a great proportion of farmers will persist in feeding oats worth $23 a ton, and corn worth the same, when they could sell the grain and buy a better feed that will produce a quarter to a third more milk, for a much less proportion in price?

Why is it that so many farmers will still use the dirty, uncomfortable rigid old stanchion with all the danger of injury to the cow stepping on the teats and udder of the next cow when she is laying down?

Why is it, that so few farmers will put in the King system of ventilation in their stables and more will persist in building new barns and stables with no provision whatever for such a system of ventilation when it would be very easy to provide this almost indispensible thing for the health and increased efficiency of the cattle?

Why is it, that it is so hard and such slow work in getting farmers to take especial pains to produce clean, sweet cream for the creamery, and see to it that the cream is sent to the creamery before it is spoiled and unfit to make good butter from it?

Why is it, that farmers as a class, are so slow and difficult to convince of the value of all these much needed improvements and of a change on their part towards such improvements

After all the missionary work that has been put forth, but comparatively few of our farmers are alive to these questions.—Hoard's Dairyman.

IMPROVED SEED WHEAT.

The Experimental Station of Kansas has been doing some most excellent work in improving seed wheat, beginning with the Turkey or Turkish Red, which was introduced in that state some twenty-five years ago by Mennonites from Russia.

The United State Department of Agriculture has been bringing over in the last ten years a large number of samples. The experiment station has been growing and breeding them, and has been distributing them among Kansas farmers. It may perhaps surprise those who have only a very little faith in growing winter wheat to know that the average yield from the different varieties of this Turkish Red wheat, which goes under the various names of Kharkov, Defiance, Malakof, Crimean, Hungarian, Weisenberg, and Ghirka, have averaged from thirty-eight to fifty-six bushels per acre. This, be it remembered, is the average for five years. A number of varieties have yielded this last year from forty-six to fifty-four bushels per acre.

The station has also been experimenting with soft wheats, which do better in the southern part of that state and corresponding climates than in the central or northern parts and climates north. The yield of these has averaged for the last four years from thirty-five to forty-one bushels per acre.

GUARDING THE CASTLE

PRECAUTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN AT WINDSOR.

How the Lives of King Edward and Royal Visitors are Safeguarded.

The visit of King Manuel of Portugal at Windsor Castle recently was the cause of considerable quiet energy at Scotland Yard, and known anarchists were watched for at the ports, and those whose presence was known in this country were shadowed, says the London Daily Mail. The precautions, however, taken for the safety of King Edward are so nearly perfect that little remains to be done in the actual guardianship of Windsor Castle.

For an unauthorized person to gain an entrance into one of the King's palaces is almost an impossibility. It has been done, but the number of times could be almost counted on the fingers of a hand.

Within the walls of Windsor Castle are treasures of priceless value, and even if the court is not in residence no one can enter without his presence being known to the police.

Although the royal residences are so well guarded at all times the guard is strongest when a foreign sovereign pays a state visit to this country. Then almost every other man is a detective within a mile or two of Windsor Castle, and no one who is not well known has the slightest chance of getting within easy reach of the royal apartments.

TWO SENTRIES ON DUTY.

When the King is in residence at Windsor the guards are doubled. Instead of one man marching up and down with bayonet fixed between sentry box and sentry box there are two.

Then there are Metropolitan policemen on duty at each gateway, as well as royal gatekeepers in scarlet and gold livery. In addition to that there are plain clothes detectives and night watchmen.

A lunatic seldom gets further than Henry VIII.'s gateway at Windsor. The little police office is just inside the gate, and here is officially recorded every day anything of note that takes place withing the precincts of the castle.

A few yards inside the gate are also the quarters of the officer who is in command of the castle guard. Telephones are installed all over the castle and the different entrances are connected with the main switchboard near the equerries' entrance.

If a paper knife was taken out of the castle to-day it would be missed to-morrow. Every treasure and piece of furniture in Windsor Castle is entered into huge books and photographs are kept of all the most valuable articles.

DEPEND ON THE BAYONET.

The sentries were always provided with ball cartridges until a guardsman fired three bullets into a stone elephant on the East Terrace of Windsor Castle, which he mistook for a ghost in the mists of the early morning. They have to depend on their bayonets.

It is very seldom that thefts take place at royal residences. The police have power to search all the bags or parcels being conveyed from the royal palaces. Many years ago a sentry at Windsor Castle managed to hook down a valuable gold watch and chain from one of the royal apartments with his bayonet on the end of his rifle, but he was quickly found out and punished.

A night watchman goes on duty inside the castle at Windsor every night and comes off in the morning. In case of fire he would at once give the alarm and in a very few minutes the royal firemen and castle guard would be on the spot and all entrances would be closed and guarded. The same system prevails at the chief of the other royal residences.

There used to be sentries at Frogmore in the early part of the last century, but there are none now. Around the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore, where Queen Victoria's remains repose, the Metropolitan police are on duty all through the twenty-four hours.

DUTIES OF GUARDS.

The penalty for a soldier failing to perform his duty when on guard outside royal residences is so severe that there are very few cases indeed on record of men having to be taken off their posts.

Two hours on and four hours off duty are the alloted times in the twenty-four hours round, and men are very seldom discovered asleep. When the court is in residence at the chief royal palaces the strain of duty is very severe at times.

The royal household police, of course take turns at night and day duty, and when important functions are on they have a very busy time.

In addition to the soldiers, police and detectives there are, of course, the royal servants and lodge keepers, who know a stranger at once.

Even if a visitor got through the strong cordon around royal residences he would still have to face the six-foot footmen in scarlet and gold who sit just inside the chief entrances. Near at their hand is a telephone, and if they have the least suspicion of a visitor the police are acquainted in a trice.

A stranger would have the greatest difficulty, even if he successfully eluded the hall porter, to find his way about Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace.

WON'T SEE COMET FOR YEARS.

The Sun Will Interfere With Early Observations.

Problems gather in the wake of Halley's Comet as it wings its flight towards the sun and earth. Little by little more of its romantic story becomes known, but the greater light casts a denser shadow, and a completer view reveals more clearly the central problem of the comet.

Every fine night the comet is photographed at Greenwich, (England) Observatory, and Mr. Crommelin recently informed a newspaper representative that is is brightening very rapidly indeed. When it was first photographed its magnitude was about sixteen. Now it is about twelve. That is, it is about eighty times brighter than in September, and it is brightening about one magnitude (i.e., twenty times) a month.

It is now thought that the comet may become faintly visible to the naked eye by the middle or end of February, but it will then be nearing the back of the sun and it will be too close to that object to be clearly visible. For two months after it will remain in the very near neighborhood of the sun and no observations will be possible.

If it is not seen in February the comet will not become visible until the end of April, when it will be a morning star, rising about 2 1-2 hours before the sun. It will transit the sun's disc about 2 a.m. on May 19, and this will be a moment of intense interest to astronomers, as it will then be possible to see whether the nucleus shows in front of the sun or not. If it can be seen it will be possible to form some idea of the density of the comet.