

A DIAMOND ROBBERY.

A FRENCH STORY.

It was in the palmiest days of the ill-fated second empire. The triumphs of the Crimea were not yet forgotten; the laurels won at Magenta were still verdant and fresh; Sedan, with all its bitter humiliation and disastrous train of tragic consequences, loomed in the misty future, undreamed of amidst the almost fabulous luxury and incredible frivolity which paved the way for the final terrible fiasco.

It was an evening in mid-winter. The Parisian season was at its height, and a brilliant audience had assembled at the Theater Francaise to witness the performance of Jules Sandeau's delightful play, "Mlle. de la Seigliere," in which the role of Destournelles was filled by the great Regnier, and that of Helene by Madeline Brohan, then in the zenith of her fame, radiant with youth, beauty, and those fascinations, the outcome of innate talent and refinement, which rendered this gifted lady one of the most charming and perfect actresses of modern days.

The empress was present, graceful and beautiful; the emperor at her side, wrapped in his favorite air of gloomy abstraction, which, like Lord Burleigh's celebrated nod, was supposed to mean so much, yet which, viewed by the impartial light of subsequent veracious history, seems to have signified so very little. Several officers in glittering uniforms were in attendance, sparkling with decorations showered upon them by a grateful sovereign; and amongst these gallant warriors, conspicuous by the sombreness of his attire, was a solitary, humble, black-coated civilian in ordinary evening dress, with the inevitable speck of red at his button-hole.

In a box almost immediately opposite that occupied by their imperial majesties was a young and exceedingly handsome Russian lady, the Countess Ivanoff, concerning whose manifold graces and fascinations the great world of Paris elected to interest itself considerably at this period.

The beauty and wit of this fair northern enchantress were the theme of every masculine tongue, and her magnificent diamonds the envy and admiration of all female beholders.

The countess was accompanied by her husband, a fine man of distinguished prepossessing appearance, who looked an embodied refutation of the celebrated Napoleon aphorism, as though no amount of "scratching" could ever unearth the Cosack element underneath his refined polished exterior.

The curtain fell after the first act. The emperor and empress withdrew during the *entre-acte*. Many humbler mortals followed their example; among them Count Ivanoff, apparently in no wise disturbed by the fact that the golden youth in the stalls were bringing a small battery of opera-glasses to bear upon the dazzling charms of his beautiful wife, with a brazen persistency which we chivalrous Britishers like to flatter ourselves is the monopoly of foreigners.

The countess leaned back in her luxurious *fauteuil*, fanning herself dreamily, serenely indifferent to the interest she was exciting. In the dim light of her curtain-shaded box the glitter of her splendid diamonds seemed to form a sort of a luminous halo around her graceful head; a myriad of starry brilliants gleamed among the masses of her gold brown hair, and two priceless stones, popularly reported to be worth that unknown quantity, a king's ransom, flashed and twinkled like twin planets in her little shell-tinted ears.

The Count had not been gone five minutes when there was a gentle knock at the door, and in answer to the countess' "Entrez," the *ouvreuse* appeared and said deferentially: "Pardon, Mme. la Comtesse, a gentleman charged with a message from her majesty the empress waits in the corridor, and desires to know if madame will have the goodness to receive him."

"Certainly! Enter, I beg of you, monsieur," responded the countess in the low sweet voice, which was not the least of her many attractions, bowing graciously, as she recognized the distinguished looking individual she had already noticed in close proximity to the emperor in the imperial box.

The visitor advanced a few steps, and still standing in deep shadow, said with grave dignity: "I trust my intrusion may be pardoned. I am desired by her majesty to ask a favor of Mme. la Comtesse, and, at the same time, to beg that she will have the goodness to excuse a somewhat unusual request."

"The obligation will be mine if I can fulfil even the least of her majesty's wishes," answered the countess graciously.

"The case is this," explained the gentleman, in a tone of well bred ease, "an argument has arisen concerning the size of the diamonds in your ear-rings and those of the countess W. The empress begs that you will entrust one of your pendants to her care for a few moments as the only satisfactory method of disposing of the vexed question. I will myself return it the instant her majesty gives it back into my keeping."

"With the greatest pleasure," agreed the countess, with amiable alacrity, detaching the precious jewel forthwith, and depositing it without misgiving, in the outstretched palm of the imperial messenger; for, indeed, diamonds were almost as plentiful in the existence of this fortunate lady as in the pages of Lothair, and she attached no more importance to them than did the jewel laden heroines of our late great and lamented premier.

The countess bestowed a smile and a gracious bow of dismissal upon her majesty's distinguished ambassador, who responded by a profoundly respectful inclination as he made his exit. Once safely outside the box, the aristocratic features of this high-bred imperial emissary suddenly lost their serene expression of dignified gravity, and relaxed into a triumphant Mephistophelean grin.

Shortly afterward Count Ivanoff returned, "I have been talking to D—," he remarked, "as he seated himself. 'Clever fellow, D—, I am not surprised at the emperor's partiality to him; he must find him so useful when he is in want of an idea.'"

"Who is D—?" inquired the countess, with languid interest.

"That is rather a difficult question," replied the count, smiling; "there are several editions of his biography—all different, probably none of them true. He is successful, which is the chief point; moreover, he is entertaining, and, at any rate, looks and speaks like a gentleman, which in these evil days is

something—even much. Tenez, he has just entered the emperor's box—the man in the black coat."

"Is that M. D—?" exclaimed the countess, waking up to a mild interest in the subject; "if so, he has been here while you were away. He came on the part of the empress, and carried off one of my earrings, which her majesty wished to compare with one of the Countess W's."

"D—? Impossible! I was talking to him the whole time I was absent, and he only left me at the top of the staircase two seconds before I returned."

"Nevertheless, *mon ami*, he has been here and taken my earring. See it is gone."

"Effectively," agreed the count with a grim smile; "but D—has not taken it. It is to the last degree unlikely that the empress would make such a request. Depend upon it you have been the victim of a thief, got up as an accurate copy of the distinguished looking D—."

"Impossible!" cried the countess in her turn. "The affair is absolutely as I tell you. It was M. D—, the veritable M. D— I see opposite, who came into this box and took away my diamond. Only wait a little, and he will bring it back intact."

"To wait a little is to lessen the chance of its recovery. In any case I will go and inquire of D—, if I can get at him, whether he has been seized with a sudden attack of kleptomania; because the idea of the empress having sent him roaming around the theatre, borrowing a lady's jewels, I regard as preposterous. Ah! these Parisian *filous*! You do not know what scientific geniuses they are in their way."

With this the count departed, and the second act was nearly at an end before he returned.

In the meantime the countess perceived that she was an object of interest to the occupants of the imperial box, and notably to the "double" of her late aristocratic-looking visitor, who, she could still solemnly declare, had stood before her in the flesh.

"I was right," whispered the count, re-entering and bending over his wife's chair: "D— knows nothing of your earring, and needless to say, the empress never sent him or any one else upon such an errand. I have put the matter into the hands of the police, and they will do all that is possible to recover it."

"Really! How very droll!" remarked the countess, with calm nonchalance—for she belonged to that order of impressive statue-like women, who remain mistress of themselves, though any quantity of "china fall;" "I will take out the other earring, or people may fancy I am trying to set the fashion of wearing an odd one," and she handed the fellow to the purloined jewel to her husband.

The play came to an end, as even that most excellent feast of reason, a good French play, well acted, must do, sooner or later, in common with all things mundane.

The countess was duly commiserated by sympathizing friends, who one and all declared, behind her back, that they never would have been guilty of the imbecility of trusting so valuable a possession to the tender mercies of however fascinating a stranger; but nothing more was heard of the stolen jewel until the following day at noon, when Count Ivanoff received a note from D—to the effect that, as he could not help considering himself partly responsible for the loss of the diamond which had disappeared through the agency of his counterpart, he had taken an early opportunity of interviewing the chief of police, who assured him he had good reason to believe the thief had already been traced as far as Brussels.

Early in the afternoon the countess was about to start for her early drive in the Bois. The frozen snow lay deep upon the ground, and her sledge with its two jet black Russian horses jingling their bells merrily in the frosty air, stood waiting in the court-yard while the countess donned her furs.

A servant entering announced that an officer of police in plain clothes asked permission to speak with Mme. la Comtesse concerning the lost diamond.

"But certainly," agreed madame, graciously; "let the officer be shown into the boudoir."

Into the boudoir presently came the countess, stately, beautiful, fur-clad, buttoning her little gloves. Near the door stood a short, wiry-looking man, with keen black eyes, closely-cropped hair, and compact military figure. The small man clicked his heels together and bowed profoundly in the presence of so much high-born loveliness, while he said with the utmost respect, at the same time laying a letter upon the table:

"I am sent by order of the chief de police to inform Mme. la Comtesse that the stolen diamond has been satisfactorily traced, but there is unfortunately some little difficulty connected with its identification. I am charged, therefore, to beg that Mme. la Comtesse will have the goodness to intrust the fellow-earring to the police for a short period, in order that it may be compared with the one found in the possession of the suspected thief. Madame will find that the letter I bring corroborates my statement."

The countess glanced hastily through the letter, and ringing the bell desired that her maid might be told to bring the remaining earring immediately; this was done, and the dapper little man, bowing deferentially, departed with the precious duplicate safely in his possession.

The countess descended to her sledge and drove to the club, to call for her husband en route for the Bois. Crossing the Place de la Concorde, she related to him the latest incident in the story of the diamond earring.

"You were never induced to give up the other" cried Count Ivanoff incredulously.

"But I tell you, *mon ami*, an officer of police came himself to fetch it, bringing a letter from his superior vouching for the truth of his statement."

"If the prefect himself had come, I don't think I should have been cajoled into letting him have it after last night's experience," laughed her husband. "However, for the second time of asking, we will go and inquire."

The coachman turned and drove as directed to the bureau of police, at which the count had lodged his complaint the night before. After a somewhat protracted delay the count rejoined his wife with a semi-grim look of amusement upon his handsome hirsute face.

"The police know nothing of your detective or his epistolary efforts," he said, drawing the fur rug up to his chin as the impa-

tient horses sped away merrily over the frozen snow; "it was the wrong man they got hold of at Brussels. Your second earring has been netted by another member of the light-fingered fraternity, and upon my honor I think he was the most accomplished artist of the two."

And from that unlucky day to this the Countess Ivanoff's celebrated diamond earrings knew her pretty ears no more.—*Alaric Carr.*

Food Value of Starch.

It may surprise some of our readers to be told that the starch of bread has not the slightest nutritive property. Its sole office is a heat-producer; and, just like the coal of the engine, the starch or sugar is burned up inside us to keep up the temperature of the machine. It is the gluten, the sticky, tenacious matter in the grain, which is the nutritive, flesh-forming material; but in the present article we have no space to follow the changes which it undergoes in the system, for we are simply treating of starch at present; and we trust we have made it clear how it is changed into sugar, and thus made soluble and fit for absorption into the juices which keep the body at a uniform temperature and in good repair. It is a common but mistaken notion that sago and tapioca are very nutritious. On the contrary, they consist almost wholly of starch, with only about three per cent. of gluten, so that, unless cooked with milk or eggs, they form a very insufficient food. The same is the case with Indian-corn flour and arrowroot, which have scarcely a particle of nutritious matter in them, so that it is a great mistake to feed an invalid or a child on such materials. They are no doubt useful, as easily digested heat-producers; but they must be cooked with milk or eggs before they are of much use for actual nutriment; and many a child has been starved to death through its parents' ignorance of this fact. It is true medical men often recommend arrowroot for those in delicate health, as it is of great importance to keep up the natural heat of the body with the least exertion of the digestive organs; but it cannot be too widely known that arrowroot pure and simple is a mere heat-producer; and milk, beef tea, soup, or other suitable flesh-forming food, must be given with it, if the child or invalid is to be kept alive. On the other hand, semolina, hominy, lentil-meat, pea-flour, etc., not being prepared by washing, contain a much greater amount of flesh-forming material than sago, arrowroot, etc.

Sunken Irish Cities.

There are numerous legends of sunken cities scattered throughout Ireland, some of which are of a most romantic origin. Thus the space now covered by the Lake of Inchiquin, is reported in former days to have been a populous and flourishing city; but for some dreadful and unabsolved crime, tradition says, it was buried beneath the deep waters. The dark spirit of its king still resides in one of the caverns which border the lake, and once every seven years at midnight he issues forth, mounted on his white charger, and makes the complete circuit of the lake, a performance which he is to continue till the silver hoofs of his steed are worn out, when the curse will be removed and the city reappear once more in all its bygone condition. The peasantry affirm that even now on a calm night one may clearly see the towers and spires gleaming through the clear water.

With this legend we may compare one told by Burton in his "History of Ireland." "In Ulster is a lake 30,000 paces long and 15,000 broad, out of which riseth the noble river called Bann. It is believed by the inhabitants that they were formerly wicked, vicious people who lived in this place, and there was a prophecy in every one's mouth that whenever a well which was therein, and was continually covered and locked up carefully, should be left open, so great a quantity of water would issue therefrom as would soon overflow the whole adjacent country. It happened then an old beldame coming to fetch water heard her child cry; upon which, running away in haste, she forgot to cover the spring, and, coming back to do it, the land was so over-run that it was past her help; and at length she, her child, and all the territory were drowned, which caused this pool that remains."—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

Conversation at Home.

Edeavour always to talk your best before your children. They hunger perpetually for new ideas. They will learn with pleasure from the lips of parents what they deem it drudgery to study in books, and, even if they have the misfortune to be deprived of many educational advantages; they will grow up intelligent if they enjoy in childhood the privilege of listening daily to the conversation of intelligent people. We sometimes see parents who are the life of every company which they enter, dull, silent, and uninteresting at home among their children. If they have not mental activity and mental stores sufficient for both, let them first use what they have for their own households. A silent home is a dull place for young people—a place from which they will escape if they can. How much useful information, on the other hand, is often given in pleasant family conversation, and what unconscious but excellent mental training in lively social argument. Cultivate to the most the graces of conversation.

Appeal to a Forgotten Law.

Few people, I should imagine, are aware of the existence of an act of parliament known as the "Tippling Act of George II." By this statute it appears that a gentleman of bibulous propensities who runs up a long score at a tavern for casual drinks can avoid payment of the bill by pleading that the consumption of spirits is contrary to public policy, and ought to be discouraged by preventing inn-keepers from recovering debts so incurred. One Mr. Fricker, a member of the Kingston corporation, who was sued last Friday in the county court, resisted a claim by a publican on these grounds, and was successful in his defence so far as the charges in the bill related to spirits supplied, the judge holding that wines were not within the act. The defendant, I observe, with somewhat unnecessary modesty, said that although he took advantage of the "Tippling Act," he did not wish to be known as a tippler. Surely he does himself an injustice. *Palman qui meruit ferat.*—*London Truth.*

The War Feeling in China.

A letter from Hong Kong to the New York Sun says: One of the first results of China's present warlike attitude is that a certain glimmering of patriotic feeling has spread throughout the entire empire, and that, in case of war, the Pekin government can look forward to concerted action on the part of the western and southern provinces. The actual condition of China, her internal relations, the feeling between the people and the mandarins, are very little known, and still less taken into account by western politicians. The Ta Tsing dynasty sits on an uneasy throne. The emperor is not of purely Chinese extraction, for Tartar blood courses through his veins, and his Manchu ancestry, together with the long period of minority from which he is just about to emerge, render him exceedingly unpopular with the people. Secret organizations of a political character overrun the empire, their sole aim being to overrun the reigning dynasty; and, besides these, there are other sects, such as the Triad society of the Canton province, who are at heart nothing less than Nihilists. Their chief desire is to abolish any and all ruling factions.

There is a smoldering volcano in the heart of China, which has long threatened to overwhelm the country. The Tai-ping rebellion, as well as the Nien-fei insurrection has proved that the feelings of disension and discontent are rife throughout the length and breadth of the empire, and no one knows this better than do the Pekin magnates. However eloquently Europeans and Americans may write of the peaceful, home-loving, loyal character of the Chinese, it is very clear that their opinions are drawn from surface indications. It is often difficult to understand the political manoeuvres of the Pekin authorities, or their direct bearing upon any one particular event. This is excellently illustrated by the apparently very confusing and contradictory positions assumed by the two leading Chinese statesmen of to-day, Li Hung Chang and the Marquis Tseng, for the dispatches which Marquis Tseng flourished in the face of the French government were the exact negative of the statements made by Li to M. Tricou. When M. Tricou and his suite took leave of Li Hung Chang, that astute statesman strenuously declared that China did not intend going to war with France; and this statement was in reply to a remark made by the French envoy that Marquis Tseng was threatening war unless France consented to relinquish her claims upon Tonquin. Li Hung Chang not only thus expressed himself in thoroughly opposite sentiments to those of his colleague, but he even told the French envoy that he hoped France would declare war against China. M. Tricou was, therefore, perfectly correct in telegraphing to his government that Li Hung Chang disavowed the policy of Marquis Tseng. China's wisest statesmen knew the hidden weakness of the country, and appreciated the fact that a war with France means either the momentary gain of prestige or the entire disorganization of the country, popular sedition, and the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty.

By wisely adding to her naval forces and coast defences, and by mobilizing and furnishing the army with better weapons and reliable commanders, China has for a time awakened a widespread fraternal feeling between the most distant of her provinces and the capital. A common foe has, in this case, been the cause of a greater concord between the formerly hostile factions. This patriotic sentiment is continually evinced nowadays in letters and essays which fill the columns of the Chinese journals in the coast ports, and make the *Pekin Gazette* for once assume an interesting tone. Of course, indignant and vituperative language has been indulged in at the expense of the French. "How dare you Frenchmen, who are as cats and dogs, fight with us who are panthers and tigers?" asks a patriotic writer in the *Hu Pao*. "Indeed, a good bit of boastful pride, together with a decided contempt for everything French, has been plainly evident, even in the least patriotic effusions, to the undoubted edification of the Chinese reading public. To foreign residents in the east the tone of the native journal is at once encouraging and satisfactory, not so much from their effusive patriotism as from the fact that they indicate an evident increase of amicable relations between the people and the government; for sedition and rebellion, which have seemed so imminent, could but have resulted in anarchy, the feeble dissolution of the treaties, and the immediate attendant endangerment of the safety of foreign residents.

Despite all adverse rumors and a cloudy political horizon, an amicable solution of the Franco-Chinese difficulty is still expected. Up to the present date the best authorities have not ceased to deny the probability of an announcement of hostilities between France and China, at least so far as the empire is concerned. However patriotic and bellicose the people of China are to-day, they may not be so after the reverses of tomorrow—a fact of which the astute advisers of the youthful emperor are only too well aware.

Tongue-Tying.

An ingenious method of putting a check upon chatter has been devised by a school-teacher, who was recently charged in a London police court with assaulting one of his pupils. The defendant, it appeared, being displeased with a boy who persisted in talking during lesson-time, fastened a strap with a slip-knot around the tongue of the offender and then tied the other end of the strap by a piece of a string to a chair, thus effectually preventing a continuance of the nuisance. After hearing the evidence the magistrate dismissed the summons on the ground that the tying of the boy's tongue was not any real punishment. The boy seemed to have been very much given to talking, and it was therefore thought advisable to degrade him the same as by putting a fool's cap on his head or tying the arms of a boy given to fighting. The London St. James' *Gazette* advocates a similar contrivance for Irish members of Parliament.

Lord Chief Justice Coleridge has written an autograph letter of thanks to the St. Louis Bar for an engrossed copy of the address of welcome extended to him upon his visit to that city, closing with:—"I hope that my visit at least did nothing to impair those feelings of respect and admiration which your nation and mine do feel, and, please God, will always feel, for one another."

GRAINS OF GOLD.

Peace is the evening star of the soul, and virtue is the sun; and the two are never far apart.

It is a great gift of the gods to be born with a hatred and contempt of all injustice and meanness.

To have respect for ourselves guides our morals, and to have a preference for others governs our manners.

The years write their records on human hearts as they do on trees, in hidden inner circles of growth which no eye can see.

Despise not any man, and do not spurn anything; for there is no man that hath not his hour, nor is there anything that hath not its place.

Never be ashamed to own you have been in the wrong; it is but saying in other words that you are wiser to-day than you were yesterday.

The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green.

It may serve as a comfort to us in all calamities and afflictions that he that loses anything and gets wisdom by it is a gainer by the loss.

True greatness, whether in spiritual or worldly matters, does not shrink from minute details of business, but regards their performance as acts of divine worship.

The tree of religion drops its leaves continually, after they have done their work; and the tree itself grows greater and stronger by the help of each one of them.

Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.

A wise general aims to conquer everything as he goes. He leaves no enemy to annoy him in the rear. He keeps the foe in front. Let every soldier of the cross keep the enemy in front. Don't cover up your sins behind you, lest, unrepented and unatoned, they come upon you in a weak moment with fatal and overpowering force. Conquer as you go on, and then you are sure of your ground.

It is one thing to indulge in playful rest, and another to be devoted to the pursuit of pleasure; and gaiety of heart during the reaction of hard labor, and quickened by satisfaction in the accomplished duty of perfected result, is altogether compatible with—nay, even in some sort arises naturally out of—a deep internal seriousness of disposition.

A New Axe for Mr. Gladstone.

Late one Saturday afternoon, says a Flint telegram, the following incident occurred at Hawarden: Just as it was growing dusk the police, who are in constant attendance upon the premier, were surprised to see a man walk rapidly up the approaches to the castle, carrying under his arm a mysterious looking parcel, and from his manner it was inferred that the man was either laboring under a very great excitement or that he was insane. He was speedily taken charge of by the police, and removed to that part of the castle where they are quartered, and on his being interrogated by the officer in charge he said he was a workman from Birmingham, and had made an axe which he intended to present to Mr. Gladstone. He would present it personally, no matter what the cost. The man was kindly treated by the officer, and after he had somewhat regained his composure, a message was sent to Mr. Gladstone, who came out of the castle and received his admirer on the lawn, where he was presented with the axe, much to the satisfaction of the man, who afterward walked to Chester and returned to Birmingham the same evening.

The artisan who represented to Mr. Gladstone that he had come from Birmingham in order to present him with an axe is named Simeon Shorter, and is in the employ of a firm at Sully, near Birmingham. Shorter made the axe of solid steel, and having accomplished his task determined to present it himself without ceremony. He accordingly set out for Hawarden, where he announced his errand, but at first had some little difficulty with the detectives. Mr. Gladstone greatly admires the implement, which is fitted with an old English oak handle.

On one side of the blade is Mr. Gladstone's armorial bearings, and on the other the Staffordshire "kno" with a postical couplet. After partaking of refreshments Shorter was presented with Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone's photographs and autographs.—*London Telegraph.*

A Substitute for Matches.

Countless accidents, as everyone knows, arise from the use of matches. To obtain light without employing them, and so without the danger of setting things on fire, an ingenious contrivance is now used by the watchmen of Paris in all magazines where explosive or inflammable materials are kept. Anyone may easily make trial of it. Take an oblong vial of the whitest and clearest glass, and put into it a piece of phosphorus about the size of a pea. Pour some olive oil heated to the boiling point upon the phosphorus; fill the vial about one-third full and then cork it tightly. To use this novel light, remove the cork, allow the air to enter the vial, and then recork it. The empty space in the vial will become luminous, and the light obtained will be equal to that of a lamp. When the light grows dim, its power can be increased by taking out the cork and allowing a fresh supply of air to enter the vial. In winter it is sometimes necessary to heat the vial between the hands in order to increase the fluidity of the oil. The apparatus thus made may be used for six months.—*Chicago Times.*

His Wife Save His Life.

Mrs. D.—"Isn't this awful?" Mr. D.—"What, dear?" Mrs.—"The paper says that in Brooklyn Mr. Benjamin R. Hubbell tried to kill his brother-in-law, David Demolo, by shooting a pistol at him. I can't understand why families should—" Mr. D.—"Did he succeed?" Mrs. D.—"No. Demolo's life was saved by a button, which turned the bullet." Mr. D.—"His wife evidently keeps his buttons sewed on. If any one should shoot at me I should be a dead duck."—*Philadelphia Call.*