

A GREAT SECRET,

OR,

SHALL IT BE DONE.

CHAPTER II.

Madeline de Lanery returned quickly to the Hotel de la Gare, crept softly past the door of her husband's room, fearing lest he should call to her; and, shutting herself in her own apartment, threw herself upon the bed, overwhelmed by a sudden rush into the stagnant calm of her present prosperous existence, of memories of the old tempestuous life of emotions and passions, keen pleasures and deep griefs. Gerald Staunton, the young clerk's face, so like that of his father whom Louis de Breteuil had murdered, recalled the old time in Paris so vividly that for an hour or more, during which she lived with the old zest and burned with the old fires, it did not occur to her to wonder and to moralize about the chance which had brought across her path the son of the man who had met with a violent death while on the way, as he thought, to answer her appeal to him for help.

Madeline had hardened since then; she was not a monster of selfishness, but her own small discomforts, and the barren monotony of her tiresome easy life with her kind but most dull husband, occupied so much of her thoughts that she really had very little time for consideration of other people and their troubles. For six years after the discovery of De Breteuil's crime and of his perfidy toward herself she had earned her own living in all sorts of ways, honestly always, although since Louis betrayed her virtue was no longer the fair fruit of modesty, but of cynical scorn. It was typical of the lowering of her moral tone which bitter experience brought about that she then, in a fit of weariness of work, married General de Lanery, without telling him she had been married before and did not know whether her husband was alive or dead, and without feeling much concern on that point herself. However, to do her justice, she considered herself permanently bound to the chivalrous and devoted gentleman whom she soon found unspeakably tedious, and dragged him dutifully about with her, accepting his fondness and spending his money with indifference which trembled on the borders of disgust.

Now, therefore, as she lay on her bed recalling the time when pleasure could please and conscience sting, she thought only of comparing it with the joyless, painless days she passed now, and did not even remember her words to Mr. Staunton: "I should like some day to meet your son, and to do him some service for the sake of your kindness to me."

When at last she was obliged to rise and go to see her husband, who had grown anxious at her long absence, she had forgotten all about the object of her visit to the factory, and on the General's asking her rather jealously what she thought of "the handsomest man in Calais," she replied quite calmly that she had not seen him.

"Then I am afraid you must have been bored, my dearest," said her husband. "Yet you stayed there a long time, and there is something in your face, a brightness, a loveliness, which I should like to see there more often. You must have seen something to interest you."

"Yes, I did," said she simply; but she offered no further information, and his pardonable curiosity remained unsatisfied.

On the following afternoon, before the excitement consequent on her visit to the factory had quite faded away, a card was brought to her bearing the name of M. Victor Fournier, with a message to the effect that he had come on the part of his father, and a request that Madame de Lanery would see him for a few minutes. Madeline directed that he should be shown into her sitting-room, and she then added a few artistic touches to her complexion, and a neckerchief of filmy cream lace to the rather dowdy toilet which had been good enough for her husband. She said to herself, as she looked mockingly in the glass which showed her at that moment, a face and figure which would have made an ideal model for a wicked Roman empress, that this provincial Don Juan would certainly not prove worthy of these infinite pains to please. "He will have a round, rosy face and very bright, beady, black eyes, and a clumsy figure: he will wear a vivid satin tie with broad stripes or big spots and his manner will be half-impertinent, half-bashful, and wholly insufferable." In making this disdainful estimate she forgot that his father, with his simple courtesy and unaffected manners, was a gentleman; and in leaving beneath her the lower middle class in which she was born, Madeline had acquired an appreciation of the advantages of good birth loftier than if she had been a king's daughter. Still, it was with a feeling of interest and curiosity refreshing in the blank dreariness of uncongenial married life that she entered the sitting-room, and without delay won all the heart the susceptible young Frenchman had to give.

"I am very glad to meet you, M. Fournier," said she, advancing into the room with her hand held out, as she saw at the first glance that her guesses about him had been, as might have been expected, wholly wrong, "Your father promised me this pleasure yesterday, but I was obliged to hurry away to my husband, who is ill, before you arrived."

"It is very good of you, madame, to receive me at such a time, when you must be anxious and preoccupied. My father begs that you will accept a souvenir of the honor you have done us in visiting the factory; I have brought it myself; it is very small, and very unworthy of your acceptance, but you will give us great pleasure if you accept it all the same."

If Victor had been at all like the fancy portrait she had drawn of him, his presentation of a parcel which she opened and found to contain some very beautiful machine made lace would have made him seem ridiculous. But as in dress and manner he scarcely differed in any respect from the young man whom Fortune had favored with the Paris stamp, she accepted the gift with more than her usual graciousness to strangers, told him his visit was a most merciful act toward a lonely traveller, and asked him to tell her what she ought to do and what she ought to see in Calais, in order to make the time of her unavoidable stay there hang less heavily upon her hands. So they sat down, and he gave her a lively description of the pleasure she might extract, if she went provided with a smelling-bottle and plenty of eau-de-cologne, from a contemplation of the picturesque beauties of

the old walls and the moat; and he told her that the chief pleasure of the town was scandal, that the old people thought it a very wicked place and the young ones a very dull one, and that its most remarkable peculiarity was the fact that it should be used as a habitation for the living instead of a tomb for the dead.

Madeline listened and laughed, and wondered if this were really only a light-hearted lively young fellow, happy in the possession of good prospects, a ready tongue, and a handsome face, or—Claude Duval. She would not have entertained the latter idea, if a chance similarity in the tall slim figure and in the type of his clear-cut thin features to Louis de Breteuil had not recalled to her that most frivolous-mannered of scoundrels. Victor was some seven years younger than De Breteuil had been when she knew him, and was not, Madeline thought, so handsome as he; still, the resemblance, slight as it was, gave the young fellow additional interest in her eyes, and she let him talk for some time before touching upon either of the subjects which just now occupied most of her thoughts.

At last, however, she broke ground by saying: "I should have liked to make some excursions about the neighborhood, but I have been alarmed by dreadful tales of demons and wolves and robbers, who go about at night attacking people. Or are they only fables?"

"Not quite that, madam, but you need not be afraid. I have never heard of one of these attacks being made by day, and only one of a person being attacked while driving. If you will allow me to ride beside your carriage, I will answer for it that no harm shall happen either to your person or your purse."

To judge by his manner, any one would have pronounced him innocent as the day, and Madeline perceived that, if he really was the robber, he was far too clever to be convicted by his own mouth. She, therefore, thanked him for his offer, and turned the conversation to another matter. In spite of all her efforts she could not frame her next question without a tremor of voice and a twitching of lip, both, however, too slight to attract notice.

"When I was at the factory yesterday, I saw there a young Englishman of the name of Staunton; do you know if he is any relation to the man of that name, a stockbroker or something of that sort I think he was, who was murdered near Lyons a few years ago? The affair caused some stir, I believe, at the time."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Victor, in evident astonishment. "Oh, no, madam. Ah! I suppose Gerald himself told you that."

"No," answered Madeline quietly; then in a voice which she found it hard to keep indifferent: "I have not spoken to him, and I saw him for the first time yesterday. The name seemed to recall some story, that was all."

"There is a story about it," said Victor, lowering his voice instinctively. "And a very mysterious one. But the strangest thing about it is that you say just what Gerald says—that his father was murdered."

"Well, and what is the true story?" asked Madeline, unfolding the lace M. Fournier had sent her, and gathering it up into folds to employ her trembling hands.

"He absconded with some thousands of pounds' worth of securities belonging to his clients, and nobody has ever been able to trace either him or the accomplice who helped him."

The lace fell from her fingers to the floor, but she did not pick it up, and by an imperative gesture she stopped him as he was about to do so.

"Who was that?" she asked, in a sharp voice.

"Another English stockbroker, a younger man, whose name, I think, was Meredith. Poor Gerald insists upon believing that this man murdered his father and stole the securities; but it has been proved that on the very day that Mr. Staunton was last seen, near Lyons, Meredith was in London, where he remained until he had disposed of the securities, which must have been sent to him by Staunton himself."

"Or by some one who had stolen them from Mr. Staunton," said Madeline, with such vehemence that Victor was startled. He had not expected such strength of passionate sympathy in the languid listless lady of a few minutes ago. "Whom was he last seen with, in Paris, for instance?" she added hotly.

"I—I don't know, I don't think any one knows, madame; but he was a cautious man, it is said, and one not at all likely to get into questionable company."

Madeline checked her rising excitement, and only asked simply: "On what grounds does his son believe him innocent?"

"On none—at least none worth mentioning. He says his father was a good man—as unconvicted thieves always are—and that he would rather have starved than have deserted his son."

"And has the lad tried to find out anything about his father's disappearance?"

"O yes. As soon as he was eighteen—that is six years ago now—he came over to France, determined to clear his father's name, as he felt sure he could do. He got as far as Paris, and then, in a most extraordinary manner, just as he thought he had got a clue, he was robbed of all the money he had saved up; and he was at his wit's end to know what to do, for he was ashamed to write home to his friends for fear they should disbelieve him and say he was no better than his father. Then Mr. Beresford my father's English partner, met him, found out what was the matter, felt sorry for him, and offered him a berth which the poor fellow was glad enough to accept, for he had thrown up his chances in order to come over on this wild hunt for evidence which, of course, he could not find."

"Why not? He should have gone to Lyons; have visited the hotel where Mr. Staunton stayed; have traced him step by step to the very last place where he was seen; have asked, hunted, found out whether he had received any letters—"

She stopped. Her excitement had grown into agony as she uttered the last words. Astonished, shocked by the intensity of the interest she showed in a stranger's story, Victor did not at once speak, but sat watching the transformation which passion had effected in her beautiful features, admiring her sensibility, envying the object of it.

"He would have done so, madame," said

he at last, "but, as I tell you, he was robbed of the money he had saved up to carry out the search; and if it had not been for the lucky chance of his meeting with Mr. Beresford—"

"Why did not this Mr. Beresford give him or lend him the money to go on to Lyons? That would have been the best way of befriending him," said Madeline, who no longer made any pretence of hiding the strong interest she felt in the story of Gerald Staunton's troubles.

"He would have done so, I am sure, if he had thought that was best, madame. He is a most kind-hearted man, and is so fond of Gerald that he has taken him to live with him."

"He may be kind, but he is not wise. What sort of a man is he?"

"He is the most marvellous old fossil in the country. To see him sitting in the corner by the stove, silent, almost motionless, with his back to the light, which hurts his eyes, he looks like nothing but a heap of old clothes. But though he never reads and hardly ever talks, he manages to find out or guess all that is going on, not only around him, but in the world; and he has such wonderful judgment that people go to him for advice as they would to a wizard. My father, who thinks he can learn more from hearing Mr. Beresford ask for the butter than in listening to a discourse from a member of the Academy, says the secret of this wonderful faculty lies in the way Mr. Beresford, isolated from the world, turns over a thing in his mind entirely without prejudice or personal feeling. For he is partly paralyzed down the right side, and can only move about with difficulty. But though his speech is not quite clear, his mind is; and Gerald Staunton forms the link between him and the outer world."

"And what does he think about the story of young Staunton's father?"

"He believes there may be more in what Gerald says than anybody thinks; for he has a great belief in instinct, and he is never tired of hearing Gerald relate what he calls his 'reasons' for feeling sure his father was innocent. He is coming back from Nice, where he has been spending the winter, in a few days; and on the way home he is going to make some inquiries at Lyons; and if he hears anything which seems to him to promise a clue, he will send Gerald there to follow it out himself."

"When will he come back, do you say? I should like to know this Mr. Beresford. All that you have told me about him and his protegee is very strange and interesting."

"We have not yet heard the day of his coming; but I will let you know as soon as we do. My father is very anxious for his arrival; for I must tell you that we owe the position we hold at the very head of the lace-making firms to Beresford's faculty of predicting, at the beginning of each season, what sort of lace will be most in request during the course of it."

"How does he do that?"

"By buying every book and every paper bearing on the fashions, and having them read aloud to him; and by communications which he has established with the leading Paris modistes, by means of one or two of his travellers, who have a sort of spy's genius for picking up just the information they want."

"I must see him; I would stay in Calais a week on purpose. Remember your promise, Monsieur Victor, to let me know when he arrives. I thought I should die of dullness in this place, and already I have heard more interesting things than I have done for the past year. You will come and see me again? I hope, in a day or two, that my husband will be better, and that you will then do us the pleasure of dining with us; but don't harden your heart until then against a forlorn traveller. Come and tell me more about the wizard. Perhaps I may be able to coax him into letting me know the summer fashions a whole month before anybody else; then I shall believe in him."

She gave him her hand again, as she bade him good-bye, with an imperial graciousness which intoxicated Victor, who left her presence in an ecstasy of admiration of this lovely woman, whose manners, conveying exactly whatever impression she intended, seemed to him perfect after the less artistic affectations of the women among whom his daily lot was cast. Returning to the factory, where he found Gerald Staunton busy with correspondence, he snatched pen and letters away, and, throwing himself on to a chair in front of the young Englishman, began to discourse upon the latter's wonderful luck.

"What do you mean? What are you driving at?" said Gerald, rather irritably. He was not ill-tempered, but he wanted to finish his day's work and get away.

"Why, you are a hero, my boy, a hero. Madame de Lanery, the loveliest woman that ever made little women look insignificant and big ones clumsy, has condescended to be interested about you, to want to know who you are, and—"

"That'll do," said Gerald, shortly. He was sensitive about any interference he might excite, knowing well that it would be roused, not about himself but about his unhappy story. For he was a modest fellow enough, and the one capacity he had shown, up to his present age off our-and-twenty, of getting through whatever work was given him to do with plodding steadiness, and no better or worse than other people, was not brilliant enough to have exposed him to the dangers of extravagant praise.

"Ungrateful stolid Englishman that you are! Why, I would give all my best engagements for next month to inspire in her one tenth of the warmth she expressed about you. She is a queen, an empress, a goddess."

Gerald had recovered his pen and his letter, and was scratching steadily away again, as if all the beauties that ever dazzled pagan or Christian were less interesting in his eyes than a bill of lading.

"Did you see her?" asked Victor, laying his hand over the letter.

"Yes—saw her yesterday."

"And you didn't worship her?"

"No."

"You are jealous because she let me stay so long this afternoon?"

"What!" said Gerald, raising his eyes to the other's face with a straightforward look of contempt. "Jealous because a woman, ten older than you or I, is good enough to amuse herself with you, and to let you fill up her spare time when she is tired of being with her old husband! Well, you can think so if you like. But just ask yourself what I should find to say to her or she to me, and whether I should like to be shut up in a hot, scented room trying to be amusing—which I never was yet—while I, and she too, for that matter, wished I were walking over the sand-hills of 'Les Bou-

leaux,' three miles away. And if you can worship a woman like that, all powder and smiling manners that one can't trust, I think it's a bad look-out for Miss Beresford."

"I can worship them both and half a dozen more at the same time, as far as that goes," said Victor, airily. "You Englishmen, and especially an Englishman like you, Gerald, consider love as a duty of the good citizen, and as soon as you are twenty-five you begin to look about for a lady-love just as you would for a pair of boots—only you are satisfied more easily. And occasionally you find you have made a mistake—her eyes are not the right color, or she can't knit—and you change her for another, just as you would a pair of boots. And you go to see her every Sunday for five years, and then you marry her; and you have had your romance and are satisfied. And you might as well be a sheep for all you know of love."

"That's all nonsense," said Gerald, angrily, "and at any rate we choose our own boots, and don't submit to have them chosen for us by our papas and mammas like little children. And if we don't want so many pairs as you Frenchmen, perhaps we like them a better quality."

As in all their little skirmishes, Gerald's heavier and more earnest manner made him seem rude, while Victor's most irritating speeches were uttered with a buoyant good-humor which made them less uncivil but more telling. And then, too, he would not be annoyed, which gave him an enormous advantage over his antagonist.

"Well, you cannot sneer at me on that point now, since the goddess I adore and the girl I am to marry are both fellow-country-women of yours."

"Madame de Lanery has married a Frenchman and is half a Frenchwoman herself by this time. And I can say that Miss Beresford must be a very poor specimen of an English girl to allow herself to be dragged over here to be married to a man she has never seen. No English father but Mr. Beresford, who is unlike everybody else and has his own way with every one, would have dared to suggest such a thing to his daughter."

"Don't let us talk about her. I dream of the long teeth and huge feet she will be sure to have. If Beresford were not my father's religion, I think he would be a little less ready to give me for a wife a girl whom her own father has not seen for years, and whose mother had knocked about the world with her for so long without her husband. Does Mr. Beresford ever mention what was the cause of his separation from his wife?"

"No, I never heard about her till last year the news came to 'Les Bouleaux' that she was dead, and he got me to send off a telegram to his daughter to ask what she proposed to do. If I were you, I wouldn't look at a girl who has been brought up like that without knowing more about her."

"Well, of course it is still open to me to decline to ratify the bargain, but that is a resource to be used only if Miss Beresford should prove to be forty and humpbacked. Old Beresford is rich and economical. If marriage fills one's purse and discharges one's filial obligations, it is unreasonable to expect more from it. Now come down to the lady with me," as Gerald fastened up his last letter. "It has left off raining; I want to feel the sea-wind in my face for ten minutes."

"You want to be near the Hotel de la Gare," said Gerald, bluntly.

However, he put on his hat and overcoat, and the two walked down to the pier together.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SCIENTIFIC.

DESTRUCTION BY SALT MINING.—The extensive subsidence at Northwich, England, according to Mr. Thomas Ward, have no other cause than the pumping of brine for the manufacture of white salt. The upper bed of salt lies beneath about fifty yards of marl; the lower bed, separated from the first by ten yards of marl, is over thirty yards thick. The sinking was first noticed about 1770, a century after the first discovery of salt, and has progressed rapidly since. Much property has been destroyed, and large lakes have been formed—one having an area of 100 acres and all depths up to forty-five feet.

CAN MAN CAUSE RAIN?—Scientific men here are beginning to study the meteorological phenomena which are believed to be due to the building of railways in this country. Recent serious damage done by washouts on the northern section of the Mexican Central Road was due to waterspouts bursting on the track, and it is a curious fact that waterspouts seem to be attracted by the iron track and telegraph wires. Recently in building the Guadalajara branch of the Mexican Central Railway it has been noted by the engineers that as fast as the construction advances rain follows, and they hold that this is due to the large quantity of steel rails on flatcars, which are carried forward as fast as the work of construction permits. The most noticeable fact is that the country is dry in advance of the construction trains, and also behind them for many miles. Rains beat down, as described, in bucketfuls just where the steel rails are, but only in circles a few miles in diameter.

WHAT THE TYPE WRITER IS DOING.—The type writer is creating a revolution in methods of correspondence, and filling the country with active, competent young ladies who are establishing a distinct profession, and bringing into our business offices, law-yers, offices, editorial sanctums, etc., an element of decency, purity, and method which is working a perceptible change. The field is widening daily; not from crowding out of their places young men who have been in the habit of claiming a pre-emption for clerical work of all descriptions, but in creating absolutely new positions. The revolution, if it may be called so, has come from the discovery to business men of an ability of which they were unaware until the great convenience and excellent work of the type writer forced them to it. The art of dictation is almost a new art, but it is spreading rapidly, and business men are beginning to understand that much of their lives has been wasted in the mere mechanical drudgery of letter writing, and that through employing a competent amanuensis they are now enabled to get off their correspondence with the least possible friction and the smallest amount of time. Whereas, five years ago, the type writer was simply a mechanical curiosity, to-day its monotonous click can be heard in almost every well-regulated business establishment in the country.

A Boon to Sleepless Men.

What pleases me, when I am tormented with sleeplessness, is a little health book of my own, in which I have jotted down a few—a very few—of the "infallible remedies" for sleeplessness which had been tried in thousands—or perhaps it was millions of cases, most of which were in the prescriber's own immediate family, or, at the farthest, circle of intimate friends, and had never once failed to effect a permanent cure. All of these cases collectively and each one by itself individually were and was exactly like my own in cause, duration, and operation. The simplicity of the combined remedy appeals at once to human confidence:

Eat nothing within three hours before retiring.

Eat a light but substantial luncheon just before going to bed. Nature abhors a vacuum. (This is one of the prescriptions I like.)

Read light literature before going to bed. Read nothing after supper. Walk a mile in the open air just before bed-time.

Go to your room an hour before retiring, and read until bed-time. Give up smoking altogether.

If you are a smoker, a cigar just before retiring will soothe and tranquilize your nerves until you can't keep awake.

Don't think about sleeping; you scare away slumber by wooing the drowsy god.

Resolutely resolve as you lie down that you will go to sleep, and sleep will come naturally.

Take a warm bath, and go from the tub into bed.

Take a cold sponge bath, jump into bed, and you'll be to sleep before your head touches the pillow.

Walk slowly about your room half an hour.

Lie on your right side, with your cheek on your hand.

Lie on your left side, with your head resting on your arm.

Count up to one thousand. (I tried this inhuman bit of idiocy one night. I came very near falling asleep two or three times, but was startled wide awake by suddenly becoming conscious that I had lost my count, and had to begin over again. This cure kept me awake one whole night, when I was so sleepy that I could scarcely hold my eyes open. The friend who gave me this prescription is not living now. She was a woman, and I could not, as a gentleman, offer her violence. So I dosed a box of marshmallows with Rough on Rats, and sent them to her.)

Drink milk. (This, according to my experience, is the best prescription in the lot. It will make you sleep better than all the bromides going, which are snares and delusions. But milk diet not only makes you sleep at night, but you want to sleep all the next day. It makes you intolerably stupid all the time. It is a very pleasant, half-awake feeling, if you have nothing else to do but to enjoy falling asleep at any time and in all manner of places, like Colville in the best told story of these times, "Indian Summer;" but if you have any work to do it is embarrassing.)

So, what is a sleepless man who wants to sleep going to do? If he eats a light luncheon, smokes a mild cigar, reads Bunner an hour, walks a mile in the air, comes back and walks another mile about his room, takes a sponge bath, cold, followed by a tub bath, warm, drinks a pint of milk, jumps into bed and lies on both sides, with his head on one arm and one hand, and counts a thousand, it will be time to get up, anyhow, and he can have a few nervous fits during the day.

It is a fact, however, that even men who think they suffer from sleeplessness do not lie awake half so long as they imagine they do. When a man says to me, "I did not close my eyes once all night," I know he lies.

ROBERT J. BURDETTE.

How Chinamen Name Themselves

The Chinaman's ways are peculiar, in nothing more so than in naming. According to the period of life he is in so is the name of a Chinaman, for he does not start away with a name from the beginning of his days and continue to bear it till the end thereof. At first the child bears the name of his father, whether legitimate or illegitimate; but the distinguishing mark varies according to the Province. At Peking, for example, the children of the same family are numbered, and, in describing Chang and his family, they would say "Old Chang," "2nd Chang," "3rd Chang," etc. In Canton, the family name is followed by the affix *ah* and an agnomen. For example, the two sons of Chang might be called Chang-ah-Bold and Chang-ah-Truthful; and the two daughters, Chang-ah-Silver and Chang-ah-Modesty. In Fokien, the agnomen is simply repeated. Thus of Chang's two sons, if the eldest be Chang-Honest, the second would be Chang-Honest Honest, and so forth. When the Chinese child goes to school (as nearly all Chinese children do), it ceases to be known by its family name, being named afresh on its first appearance before the schoolmaster. Thus Second Chang might be called Quick Runner, Bright Eye, or Twinkling Star; and he is registered by the name thus fixed upon, and known by no other to his master and school-fellows. When the youth is engaged to be married, a fresh name is given him, and from that time forth his marriage relations designate him by that name only. Again, when the youth presents himself at the public examination for an official post, he enters himself under a name of his own choice, and for all time to come that continues to be his official name. The names of Chinese mandarins, governors, and officials generally that appear in print are not the names by which these functionaries are known in private life—known to their marriage connections, their own school-fellows, and their kith and kin. When a distinguished Chinaman dies, the names of his lifetime die with him, and he is thereafter spoken of and remembered by his posthumous name.

Ill Temper

Is more rapidly improved by relief from physical suffering than in any other way. Step on your friend's corn, and the impulse to strike is strongest. Putnam's Painless Corn Extractor by quickly and painlessly removing them, insures good nature. Fifty imitations prove its value. Beware of substitutes. "Putnam's," sure, safe, painless.