A GREAT SECRET.

OR,

SHALL IT BE DONE.

CHAPTER III.

It was a stormy afternoon; the sun struggled out now and then from behind dark banks of clouds, but shone, for the most part, with a weak and watery light through a slanting veil of rain. The sea was a dark-gray green, with foaming white lines and peaks; and the big waves that rolled up to the harbor mouth, and broke against the pier-head with a roar as they fell back, tossed a blinding spray high into the air and made the planks of the pier dark and slippery.

The mail steamer from Dover was in sight and Victor and Gerald waited to see it come in, with a malicious anticipation of amusement at the spectacle of a bevy of their fellow-creatures staggering—limp, green-faced, and miserable—up the gangway and along the wet planks of the pier toward the station. So they joined the small group of fellow enthusiasts whom no stress of weather could keep from their favorite excitement of passenger-baiting; as the victims landed Victor enjoyed and moralised, while the softer-hearted Gerald was inclined to feel sorry, especially for one pale little girl, shivering in her ulster, who seemed to be alone, and who, with her arms laden with rug, umbrella, and travelling-bag, was mercilessly sandwiched and shunted and elbowed out of everybody's way, and who, when at last she had been driven up the gangway at the point of a man's gun-case, slipped on the wet planks of the pier, and was only saved from falling by Gerald himself, who sprang forward just in time, and then picked up the rug which had dropped from her hands. The pale little lady seemed at first inclined to resent his timely aid, and withdrawing her arm very quickly from the hand with which he had saved her, she said, "Merci monsieur!" in the haughtiest manner; but a second glance at him as he humbly restored her rug seemed to convince her that he was not the bold, bad man that every unintroduced stranger is, according to the creed of a carefully brought-up girl, bound to be; and her little pale cheeks flushed as she ventured upon a most diffident and well-controlled smile into his kind face, and then struggled bravely on again.

"How those English girls clothe themselves!" remarked Victor, glancing in contemptuous amusement at the little ulstered figure.

"And how much better it looks to be dressed in a flapping cloak of impossible tartan, with a hat down over the nose in front and turned up to show a skinny dark neck behind, with a blue gauze veil fastened down like a skin over the face—like half of the Frenchwomen!" said Gerald, with unnecessary excitement.

Victor showed no inclination to quarrel in defence of his country-women, so the two young men strolled off the pier in the wake of the travellers, and walked along the quay at the suggestion of the enamored one, under the windows of the Hotel de la Gare.

From behind the muslin blinds of her room, Madame de Lancry saw them, and watched, not the man at whose suggestion they had come that way, but the Englishman, the sight of whom recalled each moment more clearly the man who had come to his death in his attempt to help her in her supposed need. Conscience was waking in the woman, and, combined with a craving for strong excitement of some sort to give zest to her insipid life, it became a stimulus to prompt action on behalf of the son of the man who had befriended her. What should she do? By a word she could put Gerald Staunton on the track of his father's murderer, by simply giving the lad the address of the magnificent house in the Avenue Friedland, where Louis de Breteuil passed every winter season, each year surpassing the preceding one in the splendor of his entertainments and the extravagant luxury of his mode of life. But she was experienced enough to be a fair judge of character from a face, and she guessed that either in direct attack, or in the tortuous paths of the private detective, such weapons as the Englishman of twenty-four would use would prove blunt and pointless against a ripe and unprincipled strategist like Louis.

There was only one person who had both the power and the will to meet and cope with Louis; and that was the woman who han learnt the bitterest secrets of life from him. Madeline felt a new life, fed with strong impulses of generosity, of daring, and of revenge, glow in her veins as she took the resolution to avenge herself and lift the cloud from Gerald Staunton's life at the same time.

And when she read the newspapers to her husband that evening, with even more than her usual reckless disregard of those trifling rules of elocution and punctuation necessary to make the news of the day intelligible, the uncomplaining General little guessed that his wife was in the throes of an awakened sense of duty.

The storm-clouds had broken, and the sun was setting in an almost clear sky, when Victor Fournier and Gerald Staunton left the quay and the fascinating neighborhood of the Hotel de la Gare, and, passing again across the old drawbridge and through the dark, narrow streets of Calais reached the market-place, where their ways diverged. Victor had to cross the place to the left to reach his father's house, while the gig which took Gerald daily to and from the town was waiting for him at the factory.

"Come home and dine with us to-night," said Victor, as they stopped at the corner of the place. "You know my mother will be delighted to see you; and as for Louise, she declares you are the most charming fellow in Calais, and is always commiserating you for the lonely life you lead at 'Les Bouleaux.'"

"Thanks awfully, but I can't come; for, now all the country people's heads are turned by fright about the robberies, if I were late I should find the house locked up, and be taken for a thief when I got back."

"Mon Dieu! what a life you must have led there this winter all by yourself!"

"It has been rather dull. When I get too tired of reading to read any more, I generally go into the kitchen and sit with the servants. I say I do it to prevent their feeling nervous; but it isn't all unselfish kindness when the wind begins to blow and those beastly up-stairs shutters to bang."

"Why do you put up with it? Old Beresford's a pig to expect it of you. Why don't you tell him that, if he expects you to put up with his dull presence and still duller absence, he must make you a decent allowance, and let you find yourself a wife?"

Victor had slipped his arm within that of his companion, and was strolling with him across the market-place in the direction of his own home. Gerald laughed at his last suggestion.

"O yes, I can imagine myself taking the high hand with Mr. Beresford, asking for an allowance, as if I were indispensable to him, instead of being only a poor clerk whom he engaged out of compassion, with only just brains enough to add up a column of figures and write a business letter after clear instructions. I should like to see myself asking Mr. Beresford to be good enough to oblige me with money to support a wife! Besides, I don't want one."

"O yes, you do; you're just cut out to make a good husband for a nice girl," said Victor, in a tone which flesh and blood—of four-and-twenty—could not stand.

"I suppose you mean I'm too dull and stupid to enjoy life," Gerald retorted, with a not very successful attempt to look wild and wicked.

"Not at all, my dear boy. We all know what brilliant success you have with the women, and how Monnier's daughter—"

"Shut up!" said Gerald shortly.

Babette, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Monnier, Mr. Beresford's head game-keeper, was a rustic coquette whom the tongues of her less handsome female acquaintances did not spare.

"Now don't turn savage, dear boy," continued Victor easily. "I'm not chaffing, upon my honor, when I tell you to beware of that girl. For if ever there was a pretty little vampire, born with a natural taste for devouring her species, it is she. She would make a fool of any man, young as she is."

"With the exception, of course, of the all-conquering M. Victor Fournier."

"I! I wouldn't go near the little she-devil for all—well, all the plunder Monnier himself has collected since he has been in old Beresford's service."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that thieving runs in the family. Old Monnier—at least, he isn't very old, but, anyhow, I mean Babette's father—was as poor as a church mouse when he first became Beresford's gamekeeper, as I happen to know. And now—as I also happen to know—after being gamekeeper five years, he has a couple of cottages and a wineshop. He has feathered his nest, and his daughter means to feather hers—if she can. But if you take my advice, you won't help her."

"Very good advice, no doubt. But it would sound a little more disinterested if I had not happened to pass by Monnier's cottage yesterday week, and to see you and Babette standing by the fire in very amicable converse indeed."

Victor stopped, and making Gerald stop too, stared down into his face for some seconds without speaking. Then he asked simply, "Are you serious?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, then, you have made some strange mistake. I haven't been in the direction of 'Les Bouleaux' for more than a month. You don't believe me?"

"How can I, when I saw you with my own eyes?"

"On what day do you say it was you saw me, and at what time?"

"It was on Wednesday, the 21st; I remember the date because it was the night on which Dupont was robbed. I got back home a little earlier than usual, because your father came in and told me I might be off if I liked, as there was nothing left for me to do in the office, and he wanted me to write to Mr. Beresford. It was soon after five when I got to the gate at the end of the poplar avenue; and I got down, tied up the horse, and went on to Monnier's to see if he had finished cleaning my gun," continued Gerald flushing, "and as the door was fastened I just looked in at the window, and saw you and Babette standing together by the fire-place."

"Was the fire bright?"

"No-o, not very, I think; but it was bright enough to see you by."

"If it had been as bright as the infernal regions on a fete-night, you could not have done that," said Victor composedly, "for I was not there."

"Then M. Victor Fournier's ghost was."

"I was playing ecarte with Paul Gilbert in his brother's rooms from five o'clock that day until half-past six, when I went to dine with them at Dessin's. It it was my ghost you saw, it did you good service in warning you off such dangerous ground; but I confess I think it more probable that in the half-light you mistook some other fool for your faithful counsellor."

He saw plainly by the stubborn way in which Gerald's mouth was closed that the latter did not believe him, but he seemed not to think the matter of sufficient consequence to press the point, and, continued, in a tone which he tried to make less patronizing: "You need not think I look down upon you for being such a good fellow as you are, Gerald. On the contrary, I give you my word that if only old Beresford would do his duty, and behave handsomely to you—which is the least he can do after all the fuss he has made about your history—forgive me, I don't mean to pain you—and the use he makes of you as a kind of postman, there is no man whom I would rather see the husband of my own sister than you, Gerald."

"Thank you," said the other, with no appearance of being overwhelmed with joy at the suggestion.

"Now don't speak like that," said Victor genially. "Don't you see that I could not pay you a greater compliment than by giving you this hint? A man's sister is all that he holds most sacred in womanhood, and it is, besides, an open secret in the family that Louise takes your story to heart more as if you were a hero out of a book than a living man. It is a fact, I assure you."

"It is very good of her," said Gerald, rather stiffly, though it was impossible for him to treat such a statement of a lady's kindness discourteously.

"Now do come and dine with us; it is only at the end of the street," said Victor persuasively, as his companion stopped.

"No, thank you, I am late as it is. Give my kind regards to Madame and Mdle. Fournier,"

And wrenching his arm rather roughly out of that of his friend, Gerald escaped and made his way as fast as he could to where the gig was waiting for him. The old horse which drew this respectable-looking, but by no means fashionably built, vehicle was the fattest in the department; and although Gerald had taken a mean advantage of Mr. Beresford's absence to urge the brute daily to a sharper trot than its merciful master would have allowed, still the disrespectful questions which the *gamins* wou'd address to him from a safe distance on the roadside as to whether he was going to market instead of his grandmother, and whether his horse was to run for the Grand Prix, were among the most distasteful experiences of his daily life.

He now eyed the too well-rounded proportions of the obnoxious animal with more dissatisfaction than usual, being in an ill-humor, mounted into the gig, and drove off with a very strong feeling that the world was not using him well. It was a dull drive to "Les Bouleaux," along a flat road through a bare landscape; and the east wind blew straight into his face the whole way. A consideration of his position in life, which Victor's well-meant but rather tactless discourse had forced upon him, was dispiriting almost beyond endurance. He had no friends who cared much about him; for Mr. Beresford, with all his kindness, seemed to live in a philosophical abstraction which put him outside the influence of mutual sympathies, and made him regard Gerald rather as the subject of an interesting psychological experiment than as a solitary and steadily working young man, who took life as it came, and tried very hard to be cheerful over it. He had no prospects, for his labor was not particularly valuable, and he had arrived, either by instinct or reflection, at the conclusion that Mr. Beresford, taking nothing but a philosopher's interest in him and his "case," had no intention of raising him above his present position of poorly-paid clerk at the factory, caretaker at "Les Bouleaux," and postman between those two places.

As for marrying Louise Fournier, as her brother had suggested, that was quite out of the question, and Gerald did not regret it. Being unused now to ladies' society, he was shy and constrained in the presence of Madame Fournier and her daughter, and Louise's spontaneous gaiety had a stupefying effect upon him. She was a bright round-faced girl of seventeen, whom he had never once seen with her cheeks undimpled by a smile. She had rosy lips and sparkling eyes and the beauty of extreme youth, and was a very good-humored and pleasant creature, with a tendency to romance in her temperament which did not find expression in a pensive brow and love-worn cheek, but in a very simple and sincere interest in unlucky Gerald Staunton, and a wish, which she had openly confided to her mother and brother, that he might be discovered to be a long lost heir to something or other, and might then ask her to console him for his past misfortunes. But this seemed unlikely, and in the meantime Gerald's thoughts were more occupied with the perfidious Babette, with whom he had been carrying on an innocent but interesting flirtation, when his unlucky peep through the window of her father's cottage eight days ago had shown him the rustic beauty with an arm around her waist which he felt still convinced was Victor's, and he had experienced a sudden sharp pang which he could not mistake for any other feeling than jealousy. Since then he had avoided Monnier's cottage, and nothing would have induced him to turn his steps in that direction to-day if he had not remembered, just as his horse stopped of his own accord at the gate of the long poplar avenue leading up to "Les Bouleaux," that the gamekeeper had not yet returned his gun; and though he was not in present need of it, still it would no doubt be safer in his own room than lying about in Monnier's cottage. The white gate of the avenue stood open, as was frequently the case, there being no lodge to guard the way of entrance to the unpretending little country house which the peasants nevertheless called the "chateau;" but as the horse had stopped as if accustomed to a halt here, Gerald after a few moments' debate with himself jumped down, fastened the reins to one of the gate-posts, and sauntered down the road in an unconcerned manner toward the gamekeeper's cottage, which stood in a garden still bare, but which already showed signs of the care that would make it pretty and productive by and by. He whistled to himself as he walked up the garden-path, and tapped at the door without peeping in at the window this time. It was opened at once by Babette herself, whom he greeted in an off-hand manner, and, after one supercilious glance, asked whether her father was at home, while his eyes wandered all round the cottage and all over the landscape, and the restlessness of his manner betrayed at once to the untutored coquette that he had come to see her and her alone, though he would not have had it known for worlds.

CHAPTER IV.

Gerald Staunton s assumption of easy indifference to Babette, as she opened the cottage door to him, was no match for the girl's more genuine coolness.

"Come in, monsieur," said she very carelessly: and Gerald, not having expected her to take this tone with him, was compelled to look at her more attentively to try to make out the reason of the change.

For even when capricious Babette was on with the new love, she did not, as a rule, show any desire to be off with the old, being a young lady who felt herself quite capable of driving a team of admirers with amusement to them and profit to herself. It would have required a very shrewd judge of character to gauge the depth of the girl's lover-leading capacity on a first introduction to her. A great shy blue-eyed creature, with thick loose lips, dazzling teeth, and fair complexion browned and reddened by the sun, her face set off by a narrow frame of fair hair brushed back under her clean white cap, she had a habit of blushing which a stranger would have mistaken for a sign of modesty, and a perfectly natural way of casting down her blue eyes on receipt of a kiss or a compliment, which would have won a poet's heart, and inspired him with the new idea of setting forth in verse the superiority of the unsophisticated village lass over the brazen tennis-playing girls of his own rank of life. She wore a plain short gown of coarse blue stuff, and an apron of lighter blue cotton, and she clanked about the roughly-tiled floor in a huge pair of wooden shoes, the sound of which Gerald loved; in her large red hands she held a half-finished gray stocking on wooden knitting-pins, with one of which she indolently pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, monsieur; my father will be in immediately," said she, without so much as a look at the young gentleman, and in a tone so much haughtier and more indifferent than the one he had assumed, that Gerald instantly dropped into his usual manner, vanquished on the ground he had chosen.

"How's the cow, Babette?" he asked simply.

"She's better; I gave her a bran-mash the night before last," answered the girl, still with dignity.

"And the chicken; did you find the one that strayed away?"

"Yes, monsieur; it had got into the dry ditch behind the potatoes," she answered rather impatiently.

A pause. He could not think of anything else to ask about for a few moments; then he asked, with sudden fire, "Has old Elise given you the fifteen sous she owed you for the turnips?"

"Oh, yes," said Babette, twisting one shoulder up to her ear petulantly. "It is all settled. All those common things don't interest me," she added, tossing her head back as she leant, with crossed feet, against the wall by the wide hearth.

Gerald stared at her in astonishment. Hitherto thrift and coquetry had gone hand in hand in the girl's nature, and the prospects of the beet-root crop had excited her as much as the promise of a bead necklace. He was utterly grieved by this new phase, having always admired and encouraged the simple frankness with which she used to tell him, with her mouth full of the apples and gingerbread of his providing, which she used to devour in unromantic quantities, all the details and petty economies of the sordid cottage life. This must be one of the bad results of Victor's influence, he thought, angrily and sorrowfully. Why couldn't the fellow amuse himself in the town, without coming out here to spoil the sweet rustic innocence of pretty Babette? For Gerald believed the girl to be as honest-hearted as himself; and he now debated what terms he had better use to put the trusting creature on her guard.

"You used not to talk like that, Babette," he began at last cautiously. "Last time I was here, when you showed me that big ham you were so proud of, and we looked over the sunflower-seeds, and I made you those new clothes-pegs, you didn't talk of 'common things' then.

Babette shrugged her shoulders, tossed her head again, and unconsciously thrust into greater prominence her great wooden-shod feet as she slid into a lounging attitude of haughty indolence, still working away busily at her stocking, however.

"All that was childish. One can't be always a child. Don't talk to me about clothes pegs; I hate such things."

"Who has taught you to hate them?"

"Nobody," answered the girl hastily and rather peevishly. "You think I am just a common girl and can only talk about cows and pigs. It isn't true; I like to talk about other things."

"What things do you like to talk about now, Babette?"

"Oh, about Paris and beautiful houses, and bonbons that melt in your mouth—like the ladies of the *beau monde* talk about. You see, I'm not so ignorant as you think."

"And who talks to you about these things?" The girl did not answer. "I know; it is M. Victor Fournier." She raised her head quickly. "But you should not listen to him. Good girls shouldn't listen to those things; gentlemen who talk like that only laugh at you. If M. Victor said that to you—"

"M. Victor has said nothing to me; I scarcely know M. Victor. And who is he that he should laugh at me? He is only a 'grand seigneur de province' after all. M. Victor indeed!"

Gerald almost gasped. "Grand seigneur de province!" How on earth had she go hold of that phrase, over the pronunciation of which she was indeed a little uncertain, though its meaning as a term of contempt was indeed evidently pretty clear to her? After a short silence he got up, and kneeling on one of the wooden chairs, leant over it while he tilted himself backward and forward and addressed her with a red face and all the impressiveness of which he was master.

"Babette," he said, "you have met somebody who would like to do you a great injury, making you dissatisfied with your simple harmless country life, and with your own goodness and truth and honesty. But you mustn't listen to what he says, you mustn't indeed. If you do, you'll be awfully sorry for it, worse then sorry. You don't know what gentlemen are; I do, and I tell you the less you have to do with them the better."

"Why, you are a gentleman yourself," retorted she saucily, "though you're not so fine a one as—"

She stopped short; and Gerald continued: "Look here, Babette, tell me who it is. You can trust me, you know."

She shook her head decidedly.

(TO BE CONTINED.)

Dining on a Picture.

The early days of Jules Bastien's career were a time of struggle and poverty. He was glad to draw designs for a fashion journal, and once he went down to Damvillers and painted forty portraits of the villagers. The cost of living, small as his expenses were, was a serious matter. For the rent of his little attic studio he paid fifty dollars a year. He breakfasted upon three sous' worth of bread and two of coffee, with milk. For dinner, at a franc and a half, about twenty-seven cents, he went to the restaurant of Mademoiselle Anna, Rue Saint-Benoit.

In those early days he painted a picture of a peasant girl walking in a forest, in spring, entrapped by Loves who were casting their nets before her feet. This picture was accepted at the *Salon* in 1873, through the influence of Cabanel, but it was not sold. It was the first painting that Jules Bastien exhibited, and its fate was a curious one. Kind-hearted Mademoiselle Anna understood the needy state of the young artists who visited her restaurant, and Bastien was her favorite. When he lacked the franc and a half for dinner, she cheerfully gave him credit, and finally she accepted this picture in payment for a year's dinners. Afterward, when the name of the artist became famous, she was offered four times the amount of her bill for the painting, but she refused to part with it, and kept the first work of her protege until her death.

HISTORICAL.

An English Engraver's Work.

Two big copper cents issued in 1817 are among the rarest in the coin collection of the Philadelphia Mint. These have the Liberty head well defined, but on the top of the head, over the Liberty cap, is a small protuberance which under the microscope appears as a crown. This was cut in the die by an English engraver, who thus covertly set the British crown over the American Liberty head.

The First Use of Mahogany.

It is said that mahogany was first known to Europeans through the fact that Sir Walter Raleigh, when at Trinidad in 1595, used planks of it to repair one of his vessels. The samples thus carried to England were much admired; but for over one hundred years the wood was put to no practical use. In 1720, however, a Dr. Gibbons, of London, received a few mahogany planks from a friend in the West Indies, and employed a cabinet-maker to work them up. From that time to the present the wood has been a staple article of commerce.

Hosiery in the Middle Ages.

In the Middle Ages the feet and the whole of the lower part of the body were covered by one garment, the "hose," which was made entire, and intended to fit the person tightly. The word stocking was introduced with the article itself, and is derived from the Anglo Saxon word "stocken," to stick, because the material was made with "sticking-pins," or, as they are now termed, knitting needles. The modern word "knit" is also derived from the Anglo Saxon term cnytan, an equivalent for which exists in all the European languages, and which indicates that the art must have been quite old. Buchanan, in his "History of Inventions," says that as early as 1627 there existed in France guilds of stocking-knitters. In 1589, William Lee, in England, invented the stocking frame.

Surnames.

It is a pastime not wholly without interest to examine any list of names, as a college catalogue or a city directory, and to note the evident origin of the surnames. You will find every color of the rainbow, many birds and beasts, localities and even adjectives among the number. A writer in *Cassell's Magazine* says of surnames:

It is a common error to suppose that *surname* is a corruption of *sirename*, and only another way of saying *father's name*. The word either means *over*-name—a name given over and above the Christian name—or had its origin in the fact that at first the family name was written over (*sur*) the other name, as

"de Cobbeham
John."

Names, certainly, go back to Adam, but the origin of surnames is nothing like so remote. They cannot be traced much farther back than the latter part of the tenth century. They were first employed in France, and particularly in Normandy, and at the Conquest were brought into England. According to Mr. Lower, the practice of making the second name stationary and transmitting it to descendants came gradually into common use during the eleventh and three following centuries. It was not, however, established on anything like its present footing till the time of the Reformation. The introduction of parish registers may have materially contributed to encourage the practice. Till the twelfth century, surnames were little used in Scotland, and for a long time they were very variable. The fashion was set in Scotland, and, indeed, everywhere else, by the noble families, the common people being slow to follow it.

Hid in the Log.

A hollow trunk of an oak which lies decaying, covered, with moss and lichen, in a meadow near the City of Wilmington in Delaware, is said to have a singular history. The men of war, "Roebuck" and "Liverpool," with their tenders, during the war of the Revolution, sailed up Delaware Bay, and bombarded Wilmington, then a village. The inhabitants could make but feeble resistance. As it was known to the commander of the "Roebuck" that a small body of soldiers was in the town, on its way to join Washington, a company of Hessians was sent ashore in boats to attack and disperse the party. The men, who were few in number, could make no stand against the Hessians backed by the canon of the men-of-war. They were hidden hastily by their friends. One of them, Captain Joseph Stidham, after discharging his rifle in the face of the approaching line of soldiers, fled for his life and took refuge in the house of his cousin, John Stidham, on the outskirts of the village. The gunners on the "Roebuck" saw him enter it, and they turned their fire upon the house. The Hessians attacked it furiously. "The balls," says an old chronicler, "rained upon the roof." The mercenaries broke down the doors and windows, and rushed into the house searching for the Yankee Captain. It was a large, rambling building, with many closets and lean-tos. But Stidham took refuge in none of these. Passing through the house he reached the barnyard, and crept into the hollow trunk of an oak tree, in which he had often played hide and seek when a boy. It was so long since he had hid in it that the moss and lichen hung over the opening. The Hessians searched for him in vain. Two of them, it is said, sat down upon the log while he was in it. They turned to the ship at nightfall, and he escaped to join Washington. When the village of Wilmington grew into a city, the old log was removed to the field where it still lies.

Robbie—"Mamma, doesn't it make your hands warm to spank me?"

Mamma—"Why, yes, Robbie, it does."

Robbie—"Wouldn't it do just as well then, mamma, for you to go and hold 'em over the register?"

Customer (getting measured)—"How much are these trousers going to cost me?"

Tailor—"Twenty-two dollars, sir. How many pockets do you want in them?"

Customer—"None. I won't need any pockets after I've paid for the trousers."

Coldwater, Mich., has a schoolgirl of 14 who is quite a trapper. She has a dozen traps set, and has already sold one or two fine mink skins. She has also toyed with a revolver enough to send one bullet through her finger and another into the calf of her leg.