

# A PRECIOUS PEARL

## CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

Audrey read the note with a contemptuous smile, no faint glimmering of the truth came to her—no suspicion. Still, the words touched her. She could not sleep for thinking of them. She repeated them over and over again to herself. Her husband and herself a jest at which all London laughed—what could it mean? Surely it had no reference to Roche. She sprang up with a cry of horror on her lips. Her husband! Dear Heaven! it surely could have nothing to do with him!

Her heart beat wildly, her brain burned, her blood ran like fire through her veins, and then froze like ice. Her husband—the one man she had loved with the love of her life—could the reference affect him? A horrible fear seized her which made her heart stand still; her lips grew cold and trembled; there was something wrong or how would a stranger dare to write such words to her?

It seemed long before the sun shone through the windows—she rose at once when she saw the first beams. She had but one thought in her mind, and that was to get a copy of the Times of April 17, 18—, as soon as possible. Hope came back with the daylight. Why need she have suffered such pain and fright? All would be well; her husband stood apart from other men. She knew by the purity and stainless honor of his life that there was no need to fear him.

Yet why did her heart beat fast, why did every nerve thrill, why was her face so white, why did the breath come in thick, hot gasps from her lips, what was this awful sense of foreboding?

Her maid looked surprised on finding her beautiful young mistress up and dressed.

"Rose," said Lady Villiers, "I am going out. I want a cab—I will not take the carriage—order a cab, and dress yourself to go with me."

In a few minutes' time Lady Villiers and her maid were on their way to the city. Her purpose was not so easily accomplished as she had imagined—there were many delays—she had to drive from one place to another; but at last she succeeded, and held in her hands a copy of the Times for Thursday, the 17th of April, five years before. She looked at the paper as she held it folded in her hands—what did it contain?

"I have found what I wanted, Rose," she said, to her maid; "we will hurry back home."

She would not open the folded sheets; whatever they contained, she must be alone when she read them.

In another half hour she and her maid were at home. It was nearly noon then, and Sir Roche, after leaving a little note for his wife, had gone out—he would return to luncheon at two.

Audrey read the note. "How dearly he loves me!" was the thought that passed through her mind as she went on more to the solitude of her own room.

She controlled her impatience while Rose took off the plain walking dress and brought her her pretty dressing-gown. The maid brushed out the long, bright hair, and left it lying like a glittering veil on her mistress's shoulders; then she drew the easy chair near to the open window, and left Lady Villiers to rest, little dreaming how impatiently she wished her gone.

The door closed, and she was alone at last, with the newspaper in her hands. She saw the case at once; it was second on the list.

### "VILLIERS v. DIGHTON."

"The last hearing of this celebrated case took place to-day. Sir Roche Villiers was examined. Witnesses proved that Elodie, Lady Villiers, left London on the evening of February 21 with the co-respondent, Captain Archer Dighton. There was no defense. The divorce was granted. Captain Archer Dighton was condemned to pay five thousand pounds damages and costs."

Lower down in the same column was a paragraph which ran as follows:

### "ROMANCE IN HIGH LIFE."

"None of our readers will be surprised to hear that Sir Roche Villiers has succeeded in obtaining a divorce from his wife. The unfortunate lady whose name has lately become so notorious was young, beautiful and had been one of the leaders of fashion. Captain Archer Dighton has been condemned to pay five thousand pounds damages. This unhappy affair has created a great sensation in London. Sir Roche Villiers had not long succeeded to the barony of King's Wynne and the Rowan estates. When will dawn a brighter day for the manners and morals of Old England?"

As she read the words it seemed to her that all the life was dying slowly from her. She felt the light depart from her eyes, the strength from her limbs; the paper fell from her trembling hands onto the floor; she sank back with a low cry as from the lips of a dying woman. She lay quite motionless and silent, the sun shining on her face, the winds breathing over it, while she was unconscious of everything.

How long she remained so she never knew. When she recovered consciousness, one by one, like the sharp points of a sword, there came back to her the trivial events which at the time they

had happened had seemed nothing. Was what she had read the cause of the Letsons avoiding her, of Lady Moreton's speaking of some of her neighbors as religious people, of her never having been to court? A hundred little circumstances, all confirming what she had read, came back to her—the closed rooms at Rowan, the song with the name of Elodie upon it which her husband had destroyed so fiercely, the words he had said to her, when he first wooed her, about the treachery of one whom he had trusted.

She fell upon her knees with a bitter cry. The report must be true—everything corroborated it. Then she heard Sir Roche's step in the hall. He was singing softly to himself the refrain of some love song. He went into the library, and as he closed the door the sound of his voice ceased.

"I must go to him," she said to herself. "I must ask him about it, I must know the truth. I must go at once or I shall go mad."

She went to the library and opened the door. Sir Roche was writing. He looked up with a smile as she entered, but the smile disappeared when he saw the unutterable woe in the dark eyes, the trembling lips on which all sound seemed to die away. He rose and went to her.

"Audrey, my darling," he said, "what is the matter?"

She placed the newspaper in his hands.

"Read this," she said, "and tell me if it be true." He looked at the newspaper. Ah! there was no need to ask again if it were true or not, no need for words! He read the first few lines, and his face grew as white as her own.

"Is it true?" she asked. He was silent for a minute, looking with wistful eyes into her own; then he spoke calmly, clearly.

"Yes, it is quite true," he answered, "but why need it trouble you?"

"Is it true that five years ago you had a young wife whom you called 'Elodie'?"

"It is quite true, my darling, but—"

She held up her hand with a gesture for silence—an imperious, graceful gesture which he could not resist.

He was silent.

"Did you really marry her as you married me? Was it a lawful, legal, honorable marriage before God and man?"

"It was," he replied. "She was your wife. She loved you. You loved her. Your marriage was legal, honorable—you admit all this?"

"Yes; but listen, Audrey—"

"Let me speak first. If what is true—oh, Heaven, Roche—tell me what am I?"

"You are my dear and honored wife," he cried.

"Nay, that is impossible. A man can not have two wives, and you had a wife living when you married me."

"I deny it. I had no wife. I was free to marry as you yourself."

"Who, then, was Elodie?" she asked.

"She was my wife, but the law had freed me from her—the law had freed me, freed her."

"What law?" she asked, slowly.

"The law of the land—the law that steps in to save men and women from being driven mad."

"It could not, Roche," she said, with the calmness of despair. "There is no vow so solemn as the marriage vow. It is taken before Heaven, and death only can give relief. No man, no human power can step in and put asunder those whom God hath joined together."

She stopped, for the words died on her lips. He looked at her with infinite pity and kindness.

"You are mistaken, Audrey," he said. "The human law does step in and free those who have been joined by a solemn vow."

"It cannot—at least, that is my belief. The words of the marriage service are 'until death do us part.' Death has not parted you from Elodie, the woman you married."

She looked up at him with a strange expression.

"Is she still living, Roche," she asked, suddenly.

"Yes, she is still living," he replied, slowly.

She uttered a low cry of bitter agony.

"Oh, Heaven, Roche," she said, "if that be true, what am I?"

"Audrey, you must listen to reason. You are, in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of all men, my lawful, honored, most beloved wife."

"What am I in the eyes of Heaven?" she asked.

"The same," he replied.

"Nay, that cannot be. It is the same Heaven you called to witness the fact that you took Elodie as your wife until death should part you. Death has not parted you; therefore before Heaven, you are not free, and she is still your wife."

"My dearest Audrey, you must listen to reason," he began.

"That is reason," she answered, "the highest, wisest, best."

"You have been so quietly and so strictly brought up, Audrey," he said, "you are hardly qualified to judge."

She wrung her hands with a little cry that touched his heart.

mockery of the marriage service. An oath is taken, to be kept, not broken; only death can part them—and Heaven knows best when to send death."

"Your views are tinged by your education, Audrey," he said, sadly. "I ought to have told you of this before our marriage, but I was a coward—I dared not. Knowing your peculiar training, I was afraid that you would refuse me. I thought that perhaps you would never know—and I loved you madly."

"You should not have married me, Roche. You have not made me your wife; you have simply allowed me to usurp another's place."

"I prayed that you might never know it, Audrey. I sent away every old servant from Rowan except two. I hoped you would never know it."

"You should have told me," she said, sadly. "It would have been so much easier to part than now."

"Part!" he cried. "Oh, surely, my darling, you cannot mean that? We must not part—we cannot part!"

"I am not your wife," she said, simply. "I cannot remain here."

He drew nearer to her.

"You will drive me mad!" he cried. "If I lose you, I shall lose my hope of earth and heaven."

"And if I stay I shall lose every hope of heaven," she said.

"My darling, you cannot mean it. Why should you be so terribly hard and cruel to me when I have done nothing but love you?"

"You have made a terrible mistake," she said faintly. "You have placed me in a false position; you have made me seem to do willingly that which I detest and abhor. If it break my heart to go, I should go. Knowing what I know, I cannot remain another hour under this roof. I am in another woman's place; I bear another woman's name; I hold the heart of another woman's husband. Oh, may heaven pardon me! I did not know it!"

"Audrey, you must listen!" he cried.

She stood before him, pale, erect, with the look on her face that a painter would give to a martyr.

"No," she said, "it is better that I should not listen. I love you very dearly—I might be tempted to believe what you said; and I must not. I will not—my own conscience tells me what is right. I know the sanctity of marriage, I know the solemnity of the marriage vow—I would rather not listen. Words are specious enough, but they can never make wrong right."

"Audrey, listen to the story of my marriage. When you have heard it, I will abide by your judgment; and that will be in my favor, I am sure. Sit down, darling, and listen."

He placed her on the little couch, and knelt before her while he told her his story.

## CHAPTER X.

"You will judge me less harshly when you have heard all," he said. "I met Elodie Danefield when I was twenty years old. She was young, very beautiful, gay, animated, and full of wit and talent. She was living with her aunt, Lady Danefield, who was an old friend of my mother's—that was how I came to know her. She had no fortune, and from the first moment that Lady Danefield had seen us together she had settled in her own mind that we were to marry. Elodie was very beautiful, but nothing about her was so striking as her gaiety—she was a mistress in the art of amusing others. That first drew my attention to her. Time flew when I was with her. I do not want to tire you, Audrey, with details. The plain truth of the matter is—I loved Elodie, while she cared less for me than she did for Captain Archer Dighton. She loved him best; but he was poor and I was rich. I have often thought that, left to herself, she would have married Dighton, but Lady Danefield was always impressing upon her what a grand thing it would be to be Lady Villiers. She gave her no peace, no rest; added to which Elodie herself was ambitious. Dighton at that time was poor and without a prospect of ever being anything else. Poor child, if she had come to me and said, 'I love Archer Dighton best, but I cannot marry him because he has no money,' I should have respected her; I would have done anything to help them; but she was not frank—she married me for my money and title, knowing well in her heart that she loved Dighton best. I had never been jealous of him before marriage, and I was not likely to be so afterward. We were very happy for a few months; it was a fool's paradise, I grant, but as I did not know it, what did it matter? My wife—"

He noticed how Audrey shrank from the words, and he looked at her with a pleading wistfulness hard to bear.

"My wife," he resumed, "was very much liked. We came to London, and she was soon foremost among the leaders of fashion. Society spoiled her. Her least word was considered a prodigy of wit, her repartees were repeated, her laughing, beautiful face was welcomed everywhere—there was no one more popular in all London. It was then that Captain Dighton succeeded to a large fortune and came to town. He began to follow my wife at balls, parties, fetes, in the park, in the Row—everywhere, he was at her side. At first I thought nothing of it. It seemed absurd to be jealous of an old friend of Elodie's. I took no notice of it until I saw people smile significantly when they were together, until I found out that whoever invited Elodie invited Archer Dighton also. My blood boiled when I saw those significant looks and smiles. Still, I was gentle with her, Audrey; she was young and I loved her. At first I tried to change the state of affairs by keeping near her and declining the attentions of Captain Dighton. It was of no avail. They were much cleverer than I at ruses of all kinds. I determined at last to speak to my wife, to tell her that she was on the highroad to danger, that I was annoyed by the comments I heard, and that she must be more on her guard with Archer Dighton."

"Heaven knows, Audrey, I was gen-

tle and patient enough with her. I could not have been kinder, but she was furious. She would not listen. She declared that she would talk to Captain Dighton when and as she liked—that the world might laugh as it would; she did not care—she would brook no interference. I call Heaven to witness, Audrey, that I was kind and gentle. Things went on from bad to worse, and again I was compelled to speak to her. This time she was more indignant, and she was foolish enough to tell me that she never loved me, but had always cared for Archer Dighton. She was unwise enough to taunt me with the fact. She said many things that would have been better left unsaid. After that she openly defied me. She spent more time than ever with Captain Dighton.

"Still I did not despair. I said to myself that she was so young and easily influenced; I would not lose my patience. I tried to surround her with people from whom she could learn nothing but good. And at length I spoke to Captain Dighton. He received my remonstrances with the cool polish of a man of the world, thanked me, and took no more notice of them. After that one or two of my friends spoke to me about my wife in a manner that slightly startled me, and I saw that by some means or another the scandal must be ended at once. If Elodie would not listen to reason, then I must take her away from London.

"One night we were engaged to go to a ball at the Duchess of Quorn's—a grand ball to which half the elite of London had been invited. As we drove to Quorn House I determined to be very patient and gentle with Elodie. I knew that so many of her friends and mine would be present that I was anxious to avoid further scandal. I kissed her and said:

"Elodie, you will be very good and prudent to-night, will you not?"

"She looked up at me with a bright gleam of defiance in her eyes.

"I shall do just as I please, Roche," she answered. "If I decide to talk all night with Captain Dighton, I shall do so."

"You will do nothing, that is imprudent, I hope, Elodie," I said.

"You see I was patient and forbearing into the very last. Elodie was certainly the loveliest woman present in the ballroom. I always enjoyed the admiration she excited; but on this evening, she made a greater sensation than ever. Audrey, she would dance with no one, talk with no one but Captain Dighton. I heard the Duke of Crofton ask her to dance with him. She pleaded an engagement, and waltzed with Archer Dighton. Even then I tried my best, Heaven knows, to cover her imprudence, but she left me with a defiant smile, and went into the conservatory with the captain."

"It was the Duchess of Quorn who put the finishing stroke to my anxiety. She came to me in her kind fashion: 'My dear Sir Roche, Elodie is young,' she said, 'and like many of our young matrons, very thoughtless; would it not be quite as well to give her a hint that it is not quite prudent to linger so long in the conservatory? We know, of course, there is no blame to be attached to her, but it would be as well for you to give her a hint.'

"I thanked her grace and went into the conservatory. The sight that met my eyes was not a pleasant one. My wife was seated amid the ferns and flowers, and Captain Archer Dighton was bending over her chair; she was listening to him with a smile and a blush.

"Elodie," I said, gently, 'you have been here so long, you will take cold.'

"She looked up into her companion's face.

"I promised you the next dance, Captain Dighton," she said, 'and I am ready to keep my promise.'

"She vouchsafed neither look nor word to me. I knew that the scandal would be increased if she began to dance with him again. I went up to her.

"Let me have the pleasure of taking you back into the ballroom, Elodie," I said. 'I am quite sure that Captain Dighton will excuse me when I tell him that I have something very important to say to you.'

"He bowed, and left us. In brief, stern words, I told my wife what people were saying about her. She looked up at me, with a white, set face.

"I told you that I should please myself," she cried, 'let me pass.'

"I saw her in all the insolent splendor of her beauty, walk through the conservatory. I caught another glimpse of her an hour later. She was waiting with Archer Dighton. I was powerless. I could not make a scene in the ballroom. Audrey, that night she fled with him. At what time they left Quorn House no one knew. She sent me a note from London Bridge Station, but it merely said:

"I always liked Dighton best, and now I am with him."

### Am to be Continued.

## RELATED CONGRATULATIONS.

Returned Tourist—And so, during my long stay abroad, Miss Pinkie got married—six months ago, too. I must call to offer my congratulations. What is her name now?

Hostess—Mrs. Blinks. She lives right next door.

Enter Servant—Please, mum, Mrs. Blinks wants to know the address of some good locksmith.

Hostess—With pleasure. What is the matter?

MONEY FOR SOMEBODY.

The Belgian Government offers a prize of \$10,000 to any one who will discover a chemical that will take the place of white phosphorus in match-making.

## WE ALL HAVE OUR BURDENS.

The pressure of the atmosphere on a man of ordinary size amounts to about 14 tons.

## WINTER WRINKLES.

"What's real, Benny?" "Oh, it's the part of the cow we eat before she grows up."

"Hepperton says he won't marry any one but a widow." "I hope he won't marry mine."

She—"Why is it called the 'silver moon'?" He—"Because it comes in halves and quarters, I suppose."

Military Compliment—Lieutenant—"Good evening, miss. You look a regiment of rose-buds to-night."

When we discover the faults of our friends we are happy; when we discover the faults of our friends without being happy, we are great.

Stokes—"Is your son fond of golf?" Fogis—"Fond of it? I should say he was. Why, the young rascal actually plays it."

"She seems to be lacking in self-confidence." "She is shockingly so! Why, she doesn't believe she can plan a house better than an architect."

"Smithers is positively the most inhospitable man I ever saw." "Yes, I never knew him even to entertain an idea."

Cruel Man—The Wife—"I think the baby's teeth are troubling him." The Husband—"Good! I hate to think of the poor little fellow crying for nothing."

Friend—"What did I see? Not a single bouquet at your debut?" "Oh, that fool of a gardener didn't understand me, and sent them to my house."

"He devoted his immense fortune to the perpetuation of his memory." "You don't say so?" "Yes, he left it in such shape that every dollar will be litigated over."

An Unpromising Outlook—"It is predicted that the battles of the future will be fought in the air." "That won't work; no man can be heroic in battle unless he can get behind a tree."

"I am afraid that actors sometimes deceive us about the salaries they get," remarked the mild-mannered citizen. "No," replied the keen observer; "they may think they do, but they don't."

Wasn't Bliss—"What I know about riding a wheel," said the scorcher, "would fill a book." "Yes," said the policeman who had gathered him in, "and what you don't know about it would soon fill the morgue."

Why Indeed?—Moneyworth—"Why will the newspapers publish columns of the revolting details of murders? Here I've wasted two good hours reading through this mass of trash about the last one."

Reporter—"You say you lynched that negro last night on general suspicion?" Georgia Citizen—"Eggsactly, sah; his children wuz all down wid chicken-pox, an' he couldn't give no satisfactory explanation how they daught it, sah."

Landlady—"The price of this room is thirty marks. Will that suit you?" Student—"Perfectly." Landlady—"Then you can't have it. A man who meekly accepts such an exorbitant price, obviously does not intend to pay his bill."

What Did He Mean?—Neighbor—"Good morning, Mr. Blank." Mr. Blank—"Good morning, sir." Neighbor—"How is Mrs. Blank this morning?" Blank—"The doctor tells me she is at death's door, and I'm afraid he won't be able to pull her through."

"And," were the concluding words of the professor's lecture to the medical students, "do not promise too much. I knew a physician whose legs he had just amputated, that he would have him on his feet within two weeks."

The Trip Postponed—"Silas, we can't take your umbrella to Europe with us," said old Mrs. Stiggins. "The advertisement says that no cotton will be carried on the passenger steamers." "Then we'll stay at home," said Silas. "I ain't a-goin' across anything as wet as the Atlantic Ocean without my umbrella."

## THE COPPER OSS.

At the end of the Long Walk, at Windsor, there is an equestrian statue of George III., which is so little respected that it is never called anything but the Copper Horse. Take you as far as the Copper Oss and back sir, the local flyman or cab-driver proposes to every tourist who comes to Windsor.

One Day Queen Victoria was entertaining a great Englishman—the great man's name is not mentioned—who in the afternoon had walked from the castle to Cumberland Lodge. At dinner the Queen, always full of gracious solicitude for the comfort of her guests, said to this gentleman:

"I hope you were not tired by your long walk."

"Oh, not at all, thank you, ma'am. I got a lift as far back as the Copper Horse."

As far as what? asked the Queen, in astonishment.

Oh, the Copper Horse, at the end of the Long Walk.

The Copper Horse! exclaimed the Queen. That's not a copper horse. That's my grandfather!

A veil is drawn by the British journal over what followed. If the hero of the incident were as may be inferred from some other incidents lately disclosed, the late Lord Tennyson, it is to be doubted if the apologies which followed were very abject.

## ANXIOUS TO PLEASE.

Is there no balm in Gilead? cried the preacher.

The druggist in the front pew moved uneasily and rubbed his eyes.

All out of it at present, he murmured gently, but I can give you something just as good.

Afterward he slept more peacefully.

PRAC... THE WA... The use of... now quite... the old-fash... the latter is... tomory to ch... in a hard in... ular but... churn as we... of modern g... lies in stop... proper to... particles... kernels... a steady... the butter h... hold this up... top of it... granules for... or skimmer... ily washed... Too much... jures the fl... ly conceded... water comin... its qual... sumed in th... following it... course is ad... two or thre... and work is... Probably... nection with... thods of but... advances of... acceptance... that recom... ing. This i... of them st... ed their bu... indispensa... working, an... ing is all t... gathered in... to allow the... surface of th... way, this i... ing a handf... contents of... aration beg... the milk is... is distinct... other grain... their adher... ally brought... sing fluid... while still... scattering... corporating... ladle. The... to start the... would be d... previously s... cess of mo... butter is su... test of su... a water-lik... using the la... side and fo... folds over... yet finally... ough... Overwork... rendering i... grain. Insu... excess of w... also leaves... streaked in... a few hours... as well be... remain for... bled for... it. Every b... fault this... come hard... sible to ge... the once w... sure to lik... weather... PLAN... The prop... house are... fectly seal... second an... wall aroun... er that an... happen... Ploughman... the outside... fluence of... third, a w... through w... pass by w... the coveri... may be ev... keeping the... fourth, a s... that all b... ing the sp... with small... ments mad... the crevices... of ice. Th... tured by a... walls filled... porous su... as many m... Dry sawdus... ter than al... comes next... er these dr... ed down w... house shou... ground, exp... and having... a tight rod... sir, so that... pass through... the ice, kee... perfectly su... would be d... should be f... floor shoul... trance of a... This is the... house and i... ily. A fe... There shoul... floor by m... nels all con... a perfect at... on its side... will always... bottom from