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Diamond Cut Diamond OR, THE ROUT OF THE ENEMY.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

The dark eyes seemed to pierce him through and through, so intense and burning was their scrutiny. A strong-nerved man than was our friend Albert might have flinched a little under such an examination. He hesitated a little.

"Every soul was killed—not one survived. He cried with a sort of desperation. "You saw yourself the reports in the papers—the butchery was wholesale—no one could be identified. You will excuse me, sir, but the recollection of that ghastly scene of mutilated and unrecognisable human forms always upsets me to this very day—it was horrible! But you know that I did what I could—that I searched in vain for the pocket-book amongst the debris of the train, and that I did succeed in recovering one packet, at least, of valuable bonds, and that I then hurried straight back to England to tell you what had taken place. You do not, surely, doubt my story now, after all these years, Mr. Dane?"

The great man had removed his eyes, probably out of a sentiment of pity, from the face of his clerk. He smiled slightly at the distress in his last words.

"No, I do not doubt you at all, Trichet," he said, not unkindly. "Be easy—I trust you, and I am grateful to you, the proof of it being that I am about to trust you again; then, with a sudden, swift glance at him, "You are quite certain that that Leon de Brefour is dead?"

"Absolutely certain,"

"Ah, then, I am not at all. I believe him to be alive!"

"Sir!"

Mr. Dane pressed a call-bell upon his table, and the errand boy entered.

"Tell Mr. Trichet what you did this morning, Tom."

"I followed a lady as you bid me, sir—she didn't take a cab, but walked on into Cheapside, and down till she got into the Strand, and there she went into the bookseller's shop, and stopped a long time."

"Did she bring out any parcel?"

"No, but she bought something, because I saw her through the window."

"That will do, Tom, you may go, and the boy left."

"Now, Trichet, you will go to that shop, and you will find out where that parcel has been sent—do you understand?"

The lady was Madame de Brefour—if her husband is alive still, she will occasionally see him—if he is dead, I shall be glad to know it for certain. I need say no more to you, you must be quite aware of what I want to know. Death is not always able to talk the ends of Justice with such beautiful facility as it is sometimes supposed. Your business is very plain and simple for the present. Find Madame de Brefour."

CHAPTER XIII.

A smart suburban villa, with a square garden at the back. There are hundreds of thousands of them within thirty miles of London. The villa is gabled, red-bricked, and pretentious, sitting at the road over a narrow strip of neatly mown turf, across a low iron railing, like a vulgar country-house beauty anxious to show off her diamonds. The French window frames, and the brass-knocked front door. There are a whole row of these villas down Longway Road, as like one another as peas in a pod. And yet, in one respect, this particular villa differs widely from its fellows. Every one of them possesses at the back a small garden, empty of beauty, bare of trees, enclosed by a low modern wall planted with a fringe of evergreens. But the garden behind No. 10 is of a totally different character. To begin with, it is four times the size of any of the others, it is surrounded by a very high brick wall, it is well shaded by trees—and oh, best charm of all, it is wild!

What a magic in the very words! An old garden! Trim flower borders, wherein the columbines and lavender, the blue lupus and the yellow snap-dragon of our grandmothers' days, bloom year after year in a fragrant and luxuriant wilderness—shaded shrubby paths, moss-grown beneath the feet of a dead generation. A mulberry tree, old and crippled, resting its gnarled limbs upon artificial props, like an aged pensioner on crutches, and in the centre of the grass plot a broken sundial, overgrown with gold and brown lichens, and lit with soft velvet-like tufts, green as my lady's farthingale, as she leant against it, when she and it were young, a hundred years ago.

What a breath, from a higher realm than had ever yet inspired his low-born nature, prompted the excellent man who built Longway Villas, to spare that old garden, and to adapt it to the needs of No. 10, rather than to follow the instincts of his race, and to sweep its tender beauties, for ever, off the face of the earth? Was it, perchance, some memory, far and faint, of his mother's cottage amongst the green Kentish lanes—or some vague retirement homage for a dead girl, who was laid, years ago, in a flower-encircled grave, in the home of his youth? Impossible to say! And yet there are gleams of poetry, sometimes, in the coarsest soil—green spots upon the most barren soil. Be this as it may, the old garden was spared. The house that had stood within it was pulled down; and, perhaps, as it was ratted, and no longer weather-tight, one must take no umbrage at our friend, the builder, for destroying it. Then the green acres on either side—once known as "The Paddocks,"—were laid out into trim and even-sized building plots. The villas arose simultaneously from the bosom of the earth, and No. 10, with them, with an additional £12 10s. per annum tacked on to its rent, in consideration of the high-walled garden to which it was annexed.

One peculiarity yet remains to be mentioned. At the further end, perched on the top of the wall, is a small, round, summer-house, like a dome, to which a flight of rusty iron steps spirally ascends from the

path below. The railings are hidden from sight, beneath a wealth of honey-suckle and ivy; and when you have climbed up them, you find yourself in a little round chamber, from which, through a gap between the unlovely backs of tall, modern houses, just the straight slice was to be seen of the shining, moving waters of the Thames, as they flowed, ever silently, onwards, London-wards, and Sea-wards. Such a slice, it was, too! Greenest beauty flowers for a foreground along the edge of the towing-path—purple spikes of loose-strife, great yellow tufts of ragwort, star-like ox-eyed daisies, and long, waving grasses, of countless form and number. Then that strip of water—cool, and ever-moving—sometimes silvery grey as the winter skies, sometimes green as the summer woods—but always and ever flowing on, with its ever-varying human burden upon its tide. Then the further bank, wooded to the water's edge, with the great climbing woods, up the steep hill-side—such woods as only the banks of the Thames can show. Even so small a piece of a thing, as was to be seen from the little round turret on the top of the old garden-wall, was a possession of priceless value to the dwellers of No. 10.

It was in that in that same summer in which Angel and Dulcie Halliday were tasting the sweets of London life to the full, a very beautiful woman was in the habit of sitting, hour after hour, during the long, hot July days.

She would sit just within the little summer-house door, on a low basket-chair, with her face to the river. Sometimes her eyes would fasten upon the occasional flutter of the page as she turned it over, she might have been some beautiful old-world picture, framed into the open arch of the summer-house door.

At such times the birds would come, fluttering fearlessly about her, perch upon the back of her chair, or even the folds of her dress, or feast, with happy confidence, upon the lush honeysuckle berries, within a few inches of her shoulder. Tiny spiders, too, would weave their threads backwards and forwards about her, using the hem of her hat, or the lace upon her sunshade, as objects for their architectural designs; whilst a bright-winged butterfly would now and again poise his crimson and yellow wings almost upon her neck, or sleep, in a drowsy, beam-stumbly way, knocking himself clumsily against the knot of her bronze hair, as it gleamed in his path, in the flickering light.

But she was not always so still. Often the book failed to enthrall her; often other thoughts—against which she vainly struggled—came betwixt her soul and the ones dearly loved pages of her Montaigne, or her Bacon, and her eyes half-impaled at her, half-way with the eternal struggle, would wander restlessly away to that glimpse of the great world, upon the bosom of the river, a couple of hundred yards away. Here she would watch the gay boat-loads of men and maidens flash suddenly into the picture, and then as suddenly vanish out of it. Between one ugly straight wall and the other a small boat came—the tiny prow would shoot swiftly into sight, then the whole boat and its occupants—three or four strokes of the flashing oars, then all would be over, and the boat have vanished away from her sight for ever. Sometimes it would be a steam-launch, puffing itself, noisily, into the panorama, with gay striped awnings, and a crowd of noisy, happy people on board. Sometimes a couple of lovers, floating slowly down stream. Sometimes a tiny outrigger shot swiftly through, with one silent man pulling long, swinging strokes, that carried him out of her picture with a lightning-like rapidity. And sometimes, again, a would-be a vision of another sort; a rough barge, dirty, and smoke-grimed, slowly and laboriously dragged along by the man on the towing-path—whilst a pale, hungry-looking woman, clasping a crying infant, her hand to her forehead, looked wistfully out at the cabin-door, with a couple of ragged urchins tumbling about at her feet.

It is like life! Rose de Brefour would say to herself; and on those days when the river's endless story fascinated her, her book always failed to claim her mind to its pages.

She could see the faces, too, as they passed by, hear their laughter, catch the babel of their voices—the confused babel of their merry cries. Often there would be singing; the twang of the guitar, or the jingle of silver bells; but they none of them glanced her way, or caught a sight of the sad-eyed woman—who watched them from her lonely look-out on the old garden wall.

She did not spend her whole existence in these sad musings, however. She would proceed the old walks below, backwards and forwards, with the small white terrier following close at her skirts—or, oftener still, she sat within by the willow drawing-room—that she had softened and subtiled, in a measure, to her own quiet coloring, with her shelves full of books, and her draperies of the hue.

The old man had stood the soldier badly. He was more feeble since the journey up from the Hidden House—now two months ago. With a pang, she owned to herself, that he had never been so well as he was now.

He was more inclined to gentleness, more given to prayer, and to frequent interviews with the Priest, who came to see him.

A terrible self-reproach would come upon her, at times, when she realized all this. He was all she had to live for. She would say to herself, in bitterness. Her one duty, her one trust, was in that trust, perhaps, been unfaithful.

"I will never move him again!" she would say to her heart. "I will so live that it need never be gone through again. I will watch my every action—so that the danger may never arise again—and I will never leave him till he dies, never for one hour."

So she parted with her little brougham, and her horse—as a self-indulgence unworthy of the life of a woman who had laid down for herself—so that she could devote herself more entirely to the old man.

"I have always my books!" she told herself; "they should be sufficient for me."

Other occupations, too, had been added to her simple and uneventful life. She was now within reach of London—and often, deeply veiled, she would go up by train, and spend a few hours in adding to her store of beloved volumes. Some rare old edition, or some improved new one, advertised in the papers, would catch her eye, and she would go up to an old book shop well known to her in the Strand, and purchase the treasure, bringing it home with her, herself, so that she need leave no address behind her. And once or twice, whilst there, she had ordered some pleasant old standby work which she loved, and knew well, to be sent to a direction in London, which was still written faintly, in pencil, upon her ivory tablets.

It was on one of these occasional visits to London, that, instigated thereby to the prayers and entreaties of the old man, she had presented herself at the offices of Dane and Trichet; and, standing in her card, had requested an interview with the head of the firm.

It was not without great reluctance that she had consented to humor her father-in-law in this.

"There will be danger in it; I might be asked some question which I should be obliged to answer."

"Ah, mon Dieu, it is so many years ago! He cannot be made of stone, this man! Surely he will have forgiven me long ago, and then the truth might be known, and this terror of discovery be removed from us."

She shook her head sadly.

"I know him better," she said, "he will never forgive either the living or the dead. No good will come of it."

"But, you went, all the same, just to satisfy him."

No good did come of it. Only, had she known it, the seeds of unmix'd evil to come.

For a week later, she was attracted once more to the old bookseller's in the Strand, by one of those tempting little notices that used to prove so irresistible to her: "A bargain—Rare and unique copy of Montaigne's works, in the original binding, with the original French, earliest edition known. No reasonable offer refused." So ran the notice in the Book Lovers' Gazette, and Rose de Brefour found her way there, very afternoon, with the friendly bookseller in the Strand, with whom she had had many dealings already.

"You must make an offer for that for me, Mr. Poyntz," she said, holding out the paper to him. "What will it go for, do you suppose?"

It was a grey, bent old man, who must have spent his life in poring over the volumes in his long, low-ceilinged shop, so intimate was his knowledge of them all. He was quite unused to the sight of the beautiful woman who was so fond of musty old books; he used to say to his wife, who was a dull, commonplace old lady enough, that she made a radiance in the place when she came, with her bright, laughing, and sweet smile. Mr. Poyntz would have smiled at her from sheer pleasure at the sight of her, only that he was a plain old man who seldom gave way to his feelings, and that the friendly bookseller in the Strand, with whom she had had many dealings already.

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laughed, and tilted his hat down over his eyes.

"Oh, indeed! Madame de Brefour likes the small, I suppose? And Mr. Geoffrey Dane? Does he like it, too? Ah! love lurks under strange bindings occasionally."

"Mr. Geoffrey Dane is not a customer of mine, sir," replied the old man angrily. "I do not even know him, save by name. But as I do not care for your remarks, young man, I'll trouble you to walk out of my shop."

"All right, I'm off. Tata, old cock."

In the whole course of a long and honourable career, Mr. Poyntz had never been called "old cock" before! He gasped and fell back with closed eyes, clutching at the back of a chair. For a few moments it seemed as though he was about to have an apoplectic seizure, so fearful was the effect upon him of those terrible words.

As to Albert Trichet, he went down the street, twirling his stick round and round in a state of uncontrollable ecstacy. He drew long breaths of delight, he laughed for joy.

"My eye! What a piece of news for the Government! He credits himself with his glories. 'That's his little game is it! What a kettle of fish! I think I've got you now, my young friend, and your little hash will soon be settled. Oh! how what a rage the God will be in! I wouldn't be in your shoes, friend Geoffrey, for a good bit. Sends him books, does she? This is real jam, and no mistake! What a precious young fool! Now's my time and if I don't take something out of this my name's not Albert Trichet!"

And he snapped his fingers so merrily, and tripped along with so gay and jaunty a step, to the tune of the little gavottes of laughter and delight, that more than one passer-by turned in amazement to look after him, muttering, "mad, or drunk!" as they went by.

Madame de Brefour had forgotten him. She went back to Longway Road, a little refreshed up and strengthened for her lonely life, by her short visit to the shadowy old shop, with its low ceiling, and with that musty odour of an old bookshop, which she had loved to every true book lover as is the fragrance of myrtle and orange-blossoms to a maiden—and no disturbing memories of the strange young man by Mr. Poyntz's book-stall, who had not looked up at her as she went by, troubled her peace, as she ministered as usual to her father-in-law, chatted to old Martine, gave a few directions concerning her garden, to do cures, and then to her way, with M. Montaigne as a companion, to the little summer-house on the top of the wall.

(To be continued.)

A CURIOSITY IN MOTIVES.

The motives for which women marry are as numerous as the sands of the sea, or—as the women of every assumption is that each one of every engaged couple is "in love" with the "other one." That is, the parties are drawn together by some mysterious psychic attraction, more or less strong. In truth, this inner personal attraction is not always present, either in both parties to an engagement or even with one of the pair. Accident, propinquity, trifling circumstances, social or family pressure, some slight airy nothing decides the question between marriage or no marriage for the woman's sake, that it is as if women were always waiting on the brink of this new experience, and a very light touch caused them to fall into, or wander into, or drift into it, according to their several temperaments.

It is evident that, as Nature expects woman to marry, when the time comes she provides the way. It is the next step in the woman's life, and with the hour the opportunity comes to take it.

The curious point is the final determining motive in each case. Noting the number and variety of these, one is tempted to comment that a woman's motive for marriage is generally too high or too low; the desire to secure a living; the wish to escape from a comfortable surroundings; the wish for money to spend, for ease, position, fine clothes, or jewels, to secure leisure or travel; the fear of being an "old maid"; to secure the liberty of a married woman; desperation or sheer indifference; a weak yielding to a man's will, as expressed in his persistency; surprise; the fear of losing a friend or of making enemies; a yielding to the wishes or expectations of family or friends; pure recklessness; or a reaction from disappointed hopes in other directions; often, alas! because the woman is fitted for nothing else, and must take whatever chance offers; often, alas! and because she does not know how "to make a living any other way."

A little higher, and the motive rises out of itself. The woman feels that she should take the burden of her support from those who are unable or unwilling to bear it, or she wishes for means to help those who have befriended her, who her parents or friends; she may feel a wish to help the man, make him more comfortable, or his life happier, or himself better. She may feel able to do good still greater to others in the offered position. Marriage, may mean care, responsibility, self-sacrifice, or self-denial, yet she may take all these as a duty and a means to the performance of some large deed. But while these motives are more worthy of respect than the first class, they are just as foolish and just as misleading.

But from all these motives women marry, and when one considers how little of any human or reasonable or sensible thought enters into any of them, one is surprised that there are not more shipwrecked women in the world than there are.

PECULIAR.

Ab, funeral, I see, said the tourist. Yass assented Rubberneck Bill, Pizen Ike.