

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

"I'm afraid, doctor, you would not make a very good detective. Recollect that in nine cases out of ten, the obvious reason is always the wrong one. A smart villain, who knows enough to carry glass stilettoes, and how to use them skillfully, would not have unnecessarily alarmed the household by firing a pistol in the dead of night. Oh, no! he would simply have smothered the woman, already insensible and unresisting, with a pillow, or choked her to death."

"I see, I see," acquiesced the physician. "Go on."

"Let us assume, now, that this unknown person entered the house through the window in Monsieur Van Lith's chamber. While creeping through the room he spies a case of pistols. He has come unarmed, save with the Venetian stiletto. But once in the house, his courage fails him. He picks up a pistol from the case, saying, 'This will protect me if I have to proceed to extremities.' He passes on to Madame Roupell's chamber, and falls to searching among her papers. She is a woman of large property, and must have valuables. He is not after money, for the diamonds which she wore to the opera have not been taken. While thus engaged, he is interrupted by Madame Roupell, who rushed forward to save her papers. He jumps from his chair, overturning it, and raises the stiletto; she turns and flees; he pursued and stabs her. Do you understand, monsieur?"

"Yes, I understand everything, except his firing the pistol into the head of a woman whom he had apparently already put out of the way of harming him. I am assuming, of course, that his object was not murder. Of course, Madame Roupell may have recognized him, and he may have wanted to be sure she was dead."

"Even that would not have warranted his risking firing the pistol. Recollect, as I have already said, he could easily have smothered her without making any noise," replied Cassagne.

"True! Then why did he fire the pistol?"

"It is easy to conjecture," returned the Frenchman. "He did it to direct suspicion from himself to the owner of the weapon."

"The diabolical villain!" exclaimed the doctor, and apparently so impressed was he with M. Cassagne's theory that he kept repeating the phrase over and over again, "The diabolical villain!"

But M. Cassagne paid no heed to the ejaculations of the physician. He was down upon his knees, running about on all fours on the carpet, totally regardless of the injury to his pantaloons. His nose was within an inch of the floor. At last he stopped in the middle of the apartment, and exclaimed:

"Give me the knife." The doctor handed it to him. He at once proceeded to cut away the carpet, and then to dig furiously into the wooden flooring.

"What on earth are you looking for?" inquired Mason.

"Never mind," replied Cassagne. "Wait a moment, and you'll see."

He kept on digging away with the knife as furiously as ever. At last he stopped, and, still on his knees, held triumphantly aloft a small, oblong, black object. Then he exclaimed breathlessly:

"All right; I have got the bullet."

"If we only had Van Lith's pistol here," said Mason, "the evidence would be complete, but it is in Paris."

The detective arose and smoothed out the knees of his pantaloons, which he had sadly crumpled.

"We have got what is quite as good," he said. "Go into the next room and bring me the other pistol. Ten to one they were mates."

Taking the pistol from the doctor's hands, he pushed the bullet into the muzzle. It fitted to a nicety.

"We have thus far," said M. Cassagne, "established our theory successfully in regard to one very important point. Neither your friend Van Lith nor Monsieur Chabot had a hand in this murder. It was committed by a third party—someone who entered the house unknown to anyone, and who left it in an equally secret manner. Let us see, now, how he got away, and what means of escape presented themselves. He could not have made his exit by any of the doors, because one of them led to the room in which Van Lith was hiding, and another opened directly into the chamber occupied by Monsieur Chabot. There is still, of course, a bare chance that he retired by the door leading into the corridor; but it is altogether improbable that he would take such a risk, as that corridor was thronged with people hurrying to Madame Roupell's chamber at the sound of the shot."

"That is so," acquiesced Mason. "Had he attempted to escape into the corridor he would undoubtedly have been seen and captured."

"He must, therefore," continued Cassagne, "have gotten out of the windows. The man I have in my mind's eye at the present moment would have been smart enough to raise the window before he fired the shot. He would be particularly careful not to leave any clew that he had been in the chamber, for that would exonerate the owner of the pistol. He would certainly not have leaped from the window, because that would have left footprints on the ground; you will look in vain for such. Yet he did get out of this very window."

"How can you tell that?" asked Mason, in amazement. "It has been already inspected by the prefect of police. He

has also searched carefully under the window, for I saw him doing it. If anyone had passed through that opening he would surely have discovered it."

"The prefect is doubtless a good officer," replied Cassagne, "but if he had looked closer, he would have seen that in climbing through the window the man brushed the dust off this geranium leaf with his coat."

The doctor bent down and placed the leaf indicated alongside one that had not been touched. The truth of the detective's discovery became then convincing. One was covered with dust, the other had been swept partly clean. M. Cassagne smiled with pardonable pride, and saying that he had for the present nothing further to examine in the bed chambers, led the way down stairs, first of all, however, replacing, carefully, the seals which he had removed.

Taking his hat from the rack in the hall, and inviting Dr. Mason to accompany him, he passed quickly around to the rear of the chateau. A man servant was shaking some carpets on the back lawn. He ordered him to bring a ladder, and, placing it against the wall of the chateau, ascended it nimbly.

"I thought so," he called down to the doctor. "The ladder will bear two of us. Come up, please."

"What is it this time?" inquired Mason, craning his neck so as to be on a level with the window sill.

Cassagne directed the physician's attention to a slight abrasion of the stone.

"That was caused by the man's shoe when he leaped from the sill," he explained.

"But where did he leap to?" inquired the doctor. "This window is twenty feet from the ground, at least. Even if he had been in his stocking feet he must have left some impression, and you say he had shoes on."

"He reached the ground another way, that is all," replied Cassagne. "Most likely he jumped into that tree. Let's see if it is possible."

With the agility of a sailor ascending the rigging of a vessel, he climbed up the rest of the ladder, and stepped on to the window sill. After measuring the distance with his eye for a few moments he said:

"It was a desperate leap for a man to take in the night time; but recollect, he was a desperate fellow."

Then gathering himself together, and exerting his enormous muscular strength, he sprang from the window. A projecting bough nearly a dozen feet away was his objective point. He caught it, and with the agility of a trapezist passed hand over hand down to the trunk. As he swung himself around the branch, his eye fell upon a small, glittering object stuck fast in the fork of the tree. He picked it up, and slid rapidly down to the ground, where the doctor was awaiting him. Placing in the physician's hand a small gold locket, the detective exclaimed in a delighted voice:

"I'll have him—I'll find him now, if I have to hunt for him all over France."

Just then one of the servants approached. "It was twelve o'clock. Would the gentlemen like breakfast?"

"The gentlemen will have some breakfast by all means," replied M. Cassagne. "Our labor has been immense, our reward ought to be proportionate," and the physician led the way, and together they passed into the chateau.

CHAPTER IX.

Hardly had M. Alfred Cassagne swallowed the last mouthful of his breakfast, than his active mind reverted again to the mystery which yet surrounded the death of Mme. Roupell.

Who was the man, at present unknown, who had crept like a thief in the night into the chateau, and as quietly stolen away when his foul work had been accomplished? And what was his motive in committing the crime? Was he in any way connected with M. Chabot? Could it be possible that the prefect of police had stumbled on the real instigator of the murder in the person of Chabot, and that this unknown person was his confederate? Most likely at that moment, some officer from the prefecture was engaged in closely watching Chabot's slightest movements. There might be something in the prefect's theory, after all. Mature reflection convinced M. Cassagne that it would not do to dismiss it with a mere shrug of the shoulders. Chabot's accomplice might be the man they were looking for. Anyhow, it would not do to leave the point uncovered.

"I must write at once," he said, presently, to Cluquot. Cluquot is my assistant. We must have him keep watch of this Monsieur Chabot's movements."

M. Cassagne wrote out a series of instructions, particularly cautioning his assistant to keep track of M. Chabot, and under no circumstances, if he ran across any of the people from the prefecture, to let them really know who he was. Then he appeared to be engrossed in thought. He rubbed his hands violently together, as if he would impart activity to his brain by the friction. He arose, thrust back his chair, and began to walk rapidly up and down the room, stopping occasionally to examine the pictures on the walls, with the eye of a critic.

"Madame's husband left her very well off, I should judge," he remarked at last. "Very," replied Dr. Mason.

"How long ago did Monsieur Roupell die?"

"About fifteen years."

"And then she took up with the niece?"

"Not immediately. It was not until the death of their parents that Madame Roupell went to America to fetch them."

"Tell me what relatives Madame Roupell had besides these young ladies."

"There were no other relatives except a brother, a dissolute character, who followed his sister from America to this country."

"And his name?"

"As I recollect it, Henry Graham, I believe. A man of fifty or sixty."

"When did you last see this Henry Graham?"

"I never saw him but once. He came to the chateau, on some begging expedition when I happened to be here. He pretended to be very affectionate. He was a poor looking creature, quite broken down when I saw him, and not at all the kind of man to commit a daring crime."

"Recollect that the moment Madame Roupell died he had an interest in her estate. He was her nearest heir-at-law."

"But she had made her will, she had disowned him, and utterly cast him off. That will bequeathed all her property to her nieces. I witnessed it. I knew what was in it."

M. Cassagne began to grow more and more interested. He no longer cast his eyes upon the walls and ceiling. But he looked the doctor straight in the face.

"On what was that will written? Try your utmost now to recollect that; a great deal depends on it."

"The first will was not written upon paper. The second contained some slight bequests to friends and to favorite servants. I believe I was mentioned myself for some trifling amount. In other respects the two wills were identical. The first one was drawn up by Madame Roupell's lawyers. She kept the second will at her banker's. The first one remained in the house. It was engrossed on parchment."

"On parchment," repeated M. Cassagne. "Was it anything like this?" and he handed a scrap of the article in question over to the doctor.

"Where did you find this?" inquired the doctor when he could sufficiently recover from his astonishment to speak.

"I found it upstairs," replied M. Cassagne. "I put it in my pocket, because it was in a queer place for a scrap of parchment. I found it with four other pieces, in the fireplace of Madame Roupell's bedroom. Of course, I have a theory, now, how they came there. First of all, however, before I come to that, tell me if you are certain that the scraps were torn from Madame Roupell's will—the first will, I mean—the parchment one?"

The physician did not immediately reply. He fully realized the importance of his answer, and how much hung on it. "Give me the scraps," he said. "If there is any writing on them I should be able to tell by that. It was a very peculiar hand. It looked as if it had been engrossed by an English scrivener. Yes, the handwritings are identical."

"It is enough," muttered Cassagne, sweeping the pieces of parchment up from the table and putting them carefully away in his pocketbook. "Now for my theory. Henry Graham is the man we want to find. Mind you, I don't say he committed the murder, but you'll see he is implicated in it in some way or other. He had everything to gain by Madame Roupell's death, provided she died intestate. He must have learned in some way that his sister had made a will disinheriting him. To gain possession of what he thought was the only will was his object. If he could do that, his sister, being ignorant of the fact that the will was destroyed, would go to her grave believing herself testate. On her death her brother could have come forward and claimed the property."

It was clever reasoning. The doctor listened with breathless interest as the detective continued:

"Assuming that it is this Henry Graham, let us see what he knew and what he did. He must have heard of the making of this first will, and somehow or other he must have learned of its contents. He was ignorant of the making of the second instrument. Now let us see how he acted. He gained an entrance to the chateau. How he did this it is impossible to state at present. Probably he may have been in collusion with somebody in the house; but I don't know yet. He was evidently well posted as to the movements of the family, for he chose a time when, as he thought, they had gone to the opera. It was a mere accident—we don't know whether it was or not, but we will assume so—that Miss Harriet Weldon did not accompany the party. I am myself inclined to think there was some love affair between her and Van Lith, which accounts for his presence in the house that night, and which also accounts for his silence. You understand what I mean. He won't speak for fear of compromising the young lady."

The doctor nodded. "That is good," he said, "very good, indeed; go ahead."

"The assassin was a little disconcerted at finding Miss Weldon and your friend in the chateau. Instead of entering the house from the front, which would be comparatively easy, he was compelled to do so by the rear, running the risk of being seen by the servants. He gained Madame Roupell's chamber and proceeded to search for the document. He ransacked the desk and then threw the papers about. Unconsciously he stayed longer than he intended. So absorbed was he in his search that he was surprised by his victim. He drew the stiletto, stabbed her, and quietly resumed his search for the paper. After a time, he found it. He was about to destroy it by fire, when it occurred to him that a parchment would burn better if it was in small pieces. He started to tear it up, when he altered his mind, and instead of burning it then and there, put it in his pocket to be destroyed at some more favorable opportunity. Unluckily for him, in his hurry he did not pick up the scraps he tore off."

(To be continued.)

Marvelous, Quaint and Curious.

Ancient Ploughing and Threshing.

The ancient plough was light, the draught comparatively easy; but then the very lightness required that the ploughman should lean upon it with his whole weight, or else it would glide over the soil without making a single furrow. "Unless," said Pliny, "the ploughman stoop forward, to press down the plough, as well as to conduct it, truly it will turn aside."

Oxen were anciently employed in threshing corn, and the same custom is still retained in Egypt and the east.



ANCIENT MODE OF PLOUGHING.

This operation is effected by trampling upon the sheaves, and by dragging a clumsy machine, furnished with three rollers that turn on their axles. A wooden chair is attached to the machine, and on this a driver seats himself, urging his oxen backwards and forwards among the sheaves, which have previously been thrown into a heap of about eight feet wide and two in height. The grain thus beaten out, is collected in an open place, and shaken against the wind by an attendant, with a small shovel, or, as it is termed, a winnowing fan, which disperses the chaff and leaves the grain uninjured.

ANCIENT GOLD MINES.

Workings of Solomon's Time Still Yield Precious Metal.

Rhodesia, British Zambesia, ranks among the chief gold-bearing countries of the world. The ancients mined and carried away enormous quantities of the precious metal, but under the scientific mining systems of the present day their operations will be greatly surpassed, says the Baltimore Sun.

It has been suggested that perhaps Rhodesia was the ancient land of Ophir, the land of the mysterious King Solomon's mine, but the theory is strongly combated by some investigators. The ancient gold workings are the basis of modern operations. For every ten square miles of Rhodesia there was one ancient mine; that is, there are 75,000 old holes, which means that stupendous wealth was dug out of the earth before the days of Cecil Rhodes and his companions. Much of this wealth must have gone to the north and east; it was probably wrought into the crown of the Queen of Sheba and filled the coffers of Solomon.

The ancient smelting furnaces are still easy to recognize. They are sunk into the floor. The furnace blow pipes are made of the finest granite powder cement, and the nozzles of the blow pipes are covered with splashes of gold. The linings of the holes are covered with specks of gold. When the first lining became worn by the heat a fresh lining of cement of an excellent quality, which has outlasted time, was smeared round on the top of the old lining.

Apparently the ancients wasted gold lavishly. The yellow metal has been found in large quantities in the forms of pellets as large as buckshot in the vicinity of the furnaces and also thrown away on the debris heaps outside of the old buildings.

The tools of the ancient workers which have thus far been discovered include a small soapstone hammer and burnishing stones of waterworn rock, to which gold still adheres. Thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of gold ornaments have been taken in the last seven or eight years from the ruins of Matabeleland alone.

The Helping Hand.

The company had been discussing the social rise of a man of millions who had begun life as a laborer.

"He owes it all to his wife," declared one of the number.

The others regarded her inquiringly. "As soon as he was worth a million," she explained, "his wife set about exchanging his union card for a coat of arms; by the time he was worth two millions she had made the trade. The rest was easy."

A Girl's Way.

Patience—Do they have to beg Peggy to slung when they have company?

Patrice—Yes; but they have to beg harder for her not to slung when they haven't got company.—Yonkers Statesman.

Every other man you meet claims that at one time he thought of being a preacher.

Science AND Invention

A method of shaft sinking has been tried in France in which cement slurry is forced through boreholes in soft-flashed strata in order to form a wall of concrete in which sinking can be performed.

In reference to the height of elephants, 10 feet in males and 8 feet 6 inches in females—vertical height at the shoulders, measured as a horse—are very rarely attained, and not exceeded by 1 animal in 500.

The use of egg shells as gas mantles is an idea from Germany. The contents are drawn or blown out, the ends are neatly cut off, and the body of the shell is fixed in position like the regular article. The light thus obtained is very good, while the new form of mantle is much more durable than the old.

The production of metallic cadmium, which has hitherto been confined to Belgium and Silesia, has been undertaken by a chemical company of Cleveland, Ohio. The ore of the Joplin district is stated to be richer in cadmium than the ore of Silesia, but under the conditions of zinc smelting in the United States it has not been considered worth while to attempt to save cadmium as a by-product.

It results from the careful measurements of level recently made by Lieutenant Colonel Parisky along the line of the Transcaspian railway that the level of the Caspian Sea is 83 feet below the level of the oceans. If the Caspian Sink were filled with water up to ocean level, the town of Krasnovodsk, which stands on its shore, would be submerged, for the mean elevation of that town is between 63 and 64 feet below the ocean level.

It is not only insects that serve for the pollination of flowers, but several species of birds perform a similar office for certain flowers. Among these are humming birds and sun birds. With their long tongues these birds procure nectar, and with it pollen, from flowers which are practically inaccessible or distasteful to insects. The pollen is distributed to other flowers during the successive visits of the birds. There are some tropical plants which flourish only if these birds abound.

City people who are occasionally startled by seeing a manhole cover blown from the pavement generally ascribe the blame to leaking gas mains. But there are probably many other sources from which dangerous gases find their way into sewers, and one of these is indicated by an investigation recently reported to the American Chemical Society by Prof. A. A. Breneman. He showed that the entrance of a mixture of gasoline and soap into drains and sewers from garages, factories and other places where such materials are employed for washing, is sufficient to account for the liberation of much combustible vapor, which may play a part in sewer explosions.

CAR FOR ROYAL CHILDREN.

The Princess of Wales Has Designed a Plenic Automobile.

The Princess of Wales has her own ideas about how an automobile should be built. A car embodying some of her own pet features has just been completed for her by a prominent firm of English builders. Like the king, she has shown her preference for the British-built article, says the Kansas City Star.

An attempt has been made to make the new car a plenic vehicle. It is designed for the youngsters and a folding table is a feature. This can be put in position in a few moments for the serving of tea and light refreshments.

In designing the car her royal highness stipulated that the two diminutive seats intended for the children should be placed as far as possible from the door, so as to obviate the possibility of injury in case of accident. In addition to the two seats for children there is room for three people in the compartment.

The car is of medium power, 28-36 horse-power. Its color is an unusual shade of green and her royal highness' hand is in evidence there also. She is said to have hit upon the peculiar shade in a unique manner. While strolling in the grounds of York College, Sandringham, the princess was struck by an unusual mingling of greens on a fir tree. A bunch of the leaves was obtained to match it. The princess is said to be delighted with the result.

The young princes and princess are overjoyed with the idea of having a big car which can be said to be theirs alone. An unusually large window in the back of the car enables them to look out at the rear, a further delight, especially in fast traveling.

The Jury.

"When I goes to de co'thouse," said Uncle Eben, "it sometimes looks to me like de jury was a committee to award a prize to de smartest lawyer."—Washington Star.