

# The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

## CHAPTER XIV.

The vicomte de Valiar was seated alone in his private room in the office of the Mutual Credit and Trust Company. It was a luxuriously furnished apartment. The chairs were deep, roomy and soft. They seemed made on purpose to lull one into feelings of security. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. The vicomte's private secretary had just retired loaded down with papers and instructions. His employer sat at the table, a pile of documents on either side, and before him a single sheet, upon which an astonishing array of figures appeared.

Minute after minute passed, and still the calculations went on. At last he threw down his pencil, and walked over to the window. Partly concealed by the curtains, he looked out on the throng of people which passed up and down the street. But he hardly noticed anybody. He was really lost in his reflections.

He had, indeed, good reason to be thoughtful. A gigantic scheme, the floating of which would insure him very large returns, had that very morning been put by him before a syndicate of capitalists. It was no less a one than the consolidation of the docking interests of a great French seaport. The plan was to bring all the owners together and form a trust on what is known as the American plan, and then raise the dock tolls. With the existing keen competition and the low charges resulting therefrom, that property at present yielded but a small return for the capital invested.

The idea was a brilliant one. It would net the Mutual Credit and Trust Company, if successful, three million francs, and the Mutual Credit and Trust Company virtually meant the vicomte de Valiar. He had already enlisted considerable financial aid in support of the scheme. He was that morning expecting an addition to his forces in the person of M. D'Auburon, the friend of that very useful M. Chabot, who had introduced him to the vicomte but a few days previously.

To sell this young man a big block of shares in the new enterprise, would, the vicomte thought, not be a very difficult task. He had entertained him at his house only an evening or two ago. The splendor of that occasion could not have failed to properly impress him.

Then his wife, the vicomtesse, had so ably seconded his efforts to make D'Auburon feel that he was in good hands. She had talked glibly of their country place, a magnificent establishment on the outskirts of the famous forest of Fontainebleau, of woodland rides, of moonlit waters, and the felicities of rural life far away from the roar and din of Paris. Those marvelous eyes of hers had looked into his very soul and enthralled his senses.

De Valiar smiled as he thought how few who had come within their influence had gotten away unscathed. A knock at the door aroused him.

"Come in," he cried out, and Jules Chabot entered the room.

"Where is your friend D'Auburon?" was de Valiar's first question.

M. Chabot did not immediately reply. He sank into a chair. He seemed anxious and worried, and out of sorts.

"What on earth's the matter with you? You're not ill, are you?" ejaculated the banker.

"It's my nerves, I think. They're not so strong as they used to be."

"You haven't been yourself for some time, ever since that ugly affair at Ville-neuve," remarked de Valiar, sympathetically.

Chabot shuddered, and hid his face in his hands as if to shut out some horrible sight.

"Don't speak of it," he almost whispered, so faint was his voice. "Yes, it was enough to upset anybody."

"It was a peculiar hardship on you, Jules, just as you were on the point of succeeding as you say with—let me see, what's her name—Mademoiselle Emily, wasn't it?"

"Let's change the subject. I came to tell you something about D'Auburon. I have discovered, on inquiry, that he is even better fixed than I expected. How big a block of stock had you put apart for him in the United Dock Company?"

"A thousand shares I thought would be ample. You know Colbert-Rempin brings us a large following, and there are Bompard and the rest. Still, some subscribers will doubtless fail us at the last moment. Why do you ask?"

"It is not enough. He has some very wealthy friends. Only last night he was speaking of one, who, he says, follows his lead implicitly. He is a Swiss. He pays periodical visits to Paris, and it is said invests very largely in anything that strikes his fancy."

"That's not bad news. What is this Cressus name?"

"He did not tell me," replied Chabot. "He simply said if he thought well enough of the venture to put his own money in, that he would advise his friend to do likewise, if we needed additional capital. What are shares to him?"

"Par—of course. It is easier to sell at par than at fifteen francs on the one hundred. The one inspires confidence in a scheme, the other simply excites suspicion. In fact, I'm not sure but we will put some premium on these Dock Company shares. A little premium always makes them more attractive."

"But there are seven millions of water in it."

"A proof concern like this dock trust will stand a good deal of water," replied the financier. "After all, what does it matter? All these people will have a chance to sell out at a profit when we declare our first quarterly dividend. Those

... we want to make use of in the future can be given a hint when to unload their holdings."

"But ultimately the loss falls on somebody."

"And that somebody is the public who cares for us—well—about as much as we care for them."

M. Chabot remained closeted with the banker for nearly an hour, settling the remaining details of the dock scheme. A printed draft of the prospectus had to be gone over; the first directors of the company had to be chosen, care being taken to place upon the board the names of such capitalists as would inspire the public with confidence.

"Let me see," said the banker, running his eyes rapidly over a list which he held in his hand. "We have Liquelet, Bousnet, of Bousnet; the elder Paltrois—he is good; and Max Raumont says he is with us in case we get to an issue. The remainder of the board must be given to the dock people. They will, of course, expect some representation."

"To be sure," acquiesced Chabot, "but we must contrive to have with us only those who are open to arguments."

"Yes, that is it, my friend; open to arguments," echoed the vicomte.

"Of your usually persuasive kind," added Chabot. "Every man has his price, to be sure, nowadays."

"And always did have. In these times, commercial enterprises, my dear fellow, assume proportions of which our ancestors never dreamed. They were just as dishonest then, if you call manipulation dishonesty, which I candidly confess I don't—but their ideas were smaller. Hence the difference. Besides," he added, laying his hand impressively upon the other's sleeve, "this thing must go through. I think you, above all others, are aware of the necessity. The fact is, my dear Chabot, there have been many heavy pulls on the Mutual Credit bank lately. One cannot offer eight per cent on special deposits and always be sure of making more by using the depositors' money. Then there was the dividend on the Ardennes Charcoal and Peat Company. You know it was never earned; but we decided that it would be best to pay one."

"Well, the consequence was you placed the bonds at par, didn't you?"

"At par to the public, of course, but Herr Goldstein's commission took the gilt off the gingerbread. However, he took them all at eighty-five. I could not have placed them to such good advantage."

"The interest comes due on the sixteenth. I suppose it is useless to cross that bridge until we come to it."

"Before the sixteenth this dock company will be floated. The bank's profit on that will more than meet the interest of the Charcoal and Peat Company bonds."

"And if it isn't floated?" hazarded Chabot.

"If it isn't floated the inevitable crash will begin, or it can be averted in another way, my dear Chabot, about which I cannot talk at present. But we will not anticipate evil. Come, you must accompany me to the Bourse this morning. I have a heavy deal pending, and shall need your assistance."

As the vicomte de Valiar and Jules Chabot left the office of the Mutual Credit and Trust Company a small-sized man issued from a cafe on the opposite side of the street and walked in an apparently careless and preoccupied manner in the same direction. He followed them until they turned into a broker's office. Presently they came forth again, and in company with a third person continued to walk in the direction of the Bourse.

This third person was Herr Max Goldstein, one of the shrewdest dealers in securities in the whole of Paris. He was the broker to whom the vicomte had entrusted the sale of the first mortgage bonds of the Ardennes Charcoal and Peat Company. He was a heavy, thickset fellow, with little, cunning eyes, which had been set together as closely as nature would allow; had not an enormous nose grown between them, he would perhaps have had only one large eye in the center. He had a habit of cocking up his head when in conversation, and of listening with his mouth wide open. He had commenced life in Berlin as a bootblack with a second-hand outfit. At the conclusion of the first day's work he had accumulated enough to buy the best outfit in the city. In a week he had concluded that open air work was not to his liking, and took his business off the street into a basement, where he thrived apace.

Then the brilliant idea struck him of buying and selling theater tickets at cut rates. From this he gravitated into lotteries; from lotteries into small curbside speculations. Hardly able to write his own name, the trading instinct was so strongly developed in him that in ten years he had accumulated a very considerable fortune.

Why Herr Goldstein had not continued his uninterrupted career of prosperity in Berlin was a mystery to his friends in Paris. As he seemed to have plenty of money, however, none of them had ever dreamed of inquiring why he preferred the French to the German capital as a base for his financial operations. After all, was it any of their business?

Herr Goldstein was about forty-five years of age, but looked considerably older. Constant fighting with all sorts and conditions of men had left deep furrows across his forehead. Ladies said that without doubt he was a very unprepossessing man. He seemed to have some extraordinary influence with the vicomte,

and people were lost in conjecture as to what that could be.

The small followed de Valiar, M. Chabot and Herr Goldstein to the very entrance of the Bourse. Unable to obtain admission to the floor, he had recourse to the gallery. It was nearly empty. An old lady and a young couple from the country, evidently on their honeymoon trip, were its sole occupants. He sat in the gallery for upward of an hour, his gaze constantly on the floor of the exchange, where the vicomte, the broker ever at his elbow, moved restlessly from group to group, manipulating his deals.

When Herr Goldstein left the Bourse twenty minutes later unaccompanied by his companions, the small man tapped him on the elbow. The broker started violently; the creases in his face grew stronger; a perceptible flush overspread his features.

"Galliard!" he gasped. "I'm glad to see you!"

"As good a hand at a lie as ever, ain't you, Kaufman?" sneered the small man.

"Hush, don't breathe that name here," whispered the broker, looking around him nervously. "That belongs to the past. Come with me. Come to my office, where we can be alone. How long have you been in Paris?"

"About six months."

"During which time—"

"During which time I have been working—for whom do you think?"

"I don't know. You have got into business, perhaps for yourself—or you would, if you had sufficient capital. If a good friend—if I, for instance, showed you how you could make some money it would suit you, would it not?"

"No, I have a pretty good berth, thank you."

"It is a perfect gold mine for you; if you will only hold your tongue."

The small man only smiled significantly. The two walked on side by side until the broker's office was reached.

"Come in," said the broker, in a coaxing voice, "and tell me what you want."

The small man passed in through the open door and went into the broker's office.

"See that under no circumstances am I disturbed," was the instruction Herr Max gave to his clerk. "I have important business with this gentleman."

Four o'clock came, and Herr Goldstein came out and sent the clerk home. It was an hour earlier than usual, but the clerk was glad to get away. He lived in a small flat and had a wife and four children to support. He could take his time now and walk home instead of paying for a seat in an omnibus. The hours went by. It was past midnight when the two men came out of the inner office and into the street.

"I live on the other side. Student quarters," said Goldstein. "Come with me, I'll put you up for the night. We must cross by the Pont Neuf."

"You must make it fifty thousand," said the small man, as they went along. "That's cheap enough. Old friends shouldn't be hard on each other."

A fearful expression came over the other's face as they neared the bridge. Fifty thousand francs. An enormous sum. And if he paid it—what then? He had but this fellow's word that he would keep silence.

They stopped for a moment in the center of the bridge and sat down unsteadily on one of the embrasures. It was two o'clock. The lights flashed along the river. Behind and in front of them arose the dull roar of Paris which ceases not by night nor by day. Looking over the low parapet they could see the dark waters of the river as they swirled below.

"You will make it fifty thousand, will you not?" urged the small man.

He uttered no cry as the hand of the broker closed upon his throat with an iron grasp; but for a moment or two he struggled desperately as he realized the other's purpose. But the broker seemed to have become suddenly sober. The small man was like a child in his terrible clutches. He raised him to the top of the low parapet and whispered hoarsely:

"I will send you where you won't need the money."

Then he flung the blackmailer from him with the force of a catapult. The waters received the detective and closed over his head. He had not time to utter a cry.

The broker passed quickly from the bridge and, plunging into a narrow street which diverged from the main thoroughfare, soon gained his apartments. Arrived there, he threw himself, dressed as he was, upon the sofa, and slept soundly till daylight.

Three days passed; some workmen on a brick barge drew from the black and slimy river the body of a man which bore upon its throat the marks of fingers. At the morgue Victor Lablanche, the prefect of police, recognized in the murdered man the detective he had put on the track of M. Chabot.

"Poor fellow!" he exclaimed, as he examined the finger marks at his throat. "A tiger must have seized him. He was first strangled and then thrown into the river."

And the sole clue he had was this: The murderer must have had enormous hands.

(To be continued.)

Cause for Thanks.

Church—"There's one thing to be said in favor of the phonograph."

Gotham—"I'd just like to know what it is?"

"Well, they haven't succeeded in making a record reproducing all the noise one hears on the Fourth of July."—Yonkers Statesman.

Just Possible.

Her—What is meant by "going from bad to worse?"

Him—Getting a divorce and marrying again, I believe.

## RECALLED JAPANESE ENVOY.



JAPANESE AMBASSADOR, KOKI.



COUNTESS HATZFELDT, KOKI'S DAUGHTER.



VISCOUNTESS KOKI, WIFE OF JAPANESE AMBASSADOR.

## State Laws and the Sale of Firearms.

The prohibition, through legislative enactment, of the sale of firearms in Georgia, South Carolina and other Southern States has aroused widespread discussion as to the constitutionality of State laws of this character. Fred I. Johnson, of Fitchburg, Mass., in presenting the situation from the viewpoint of the manufacturer, says:

"The movement by the Legislatures of certain States to prohibit the sale of firearms within those States is, beyond doubt, unconstitutional; it is detrimental to the business interests of the States in question, without in any way restricting the quantity of firearms purchased and in use; it is intended to deprive those who live in rural districts where police protection is inadequate, or wholly lacking, of the means to protect themselves, their families and their property; it is a hardship to an excellent class of merchants, for, while the law proscribes the sale of firearms by hundreds of hardware stores in the States affected, it does not prevent their citizens from buying such arms elsewhere, and the money thus expended goes, not into the coffers of the local merchant, but into those of great business houses in other States. Such a result is demoralizing to the trade of the State in question, and to the firearms manufacturing industry as well."—Success Magazine.

## Considerate Bridegroom.

A girl and a young man, both of whom had steady jobs, were married the other day. The day after they were married the girl said to her fond husband: "Oh, George, now that we are married, there is only one thing I regret, and that is that I have to give up my fine position." The fond young husband stroked the silken tresses of the young wife's hair and soothingly replied: "Now, darling, don't worry. You needn't give up your position. I'll give up mine."—Kansas City Star.

## Lost Time.

"Time is precious," remarked the minister.

"It is, indeed," replied the man of business, "and I've wasted lots of it."

"By indulging in foolish pleasures, I suppose," said the good man.

"No," replied the other. "I lost it by being punctual in keeping my appointments with others."

## Autumn the Season for Crime.

Taking all crimes, more are committed in the autumn than during any other of the seasons of the year.

Deny it if you please, but the facts are that everybody is looking for a shade the best of it.

## ALFONSO'S ISLAND PALACE.

Wedding Present in Bay of Arosa to Be Site of Summer Home.

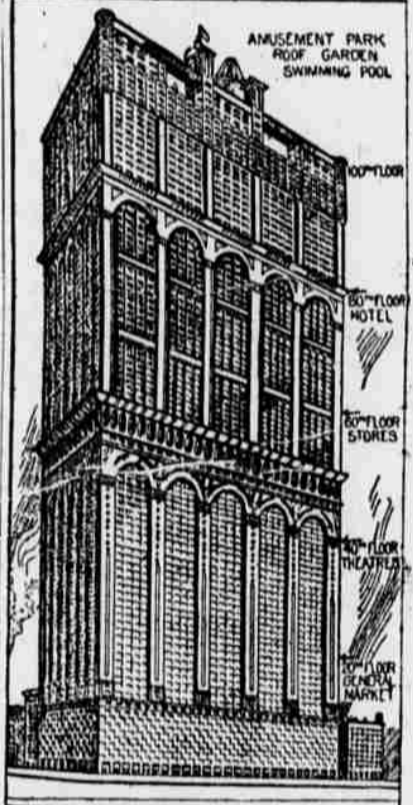
King Alfonso of Spain is preparing to enjoy next summer the old wedding present that some wealthy Spanish nobleman bestowed on him and Queen Victoria, says the New York Sun. He is having a palace built on the island of Cortegada in the Bay of Arosa, opposite the port of Carril and the summer resort of Villagarcia, famous for its sulphur baths. The villa at San Sebastian, at which he has heretofore spent a good deal of time each summer, is the property of his mother, and the new summer home is designed to give the youthful couple a place where they can entertain guests independently.

The island is about three miles and a half in circumference. It is diversified in surface and beautifully wooded, while in all directions it receives cooling breezes and commands splendid views, varying from the broad Atlantic to the picturesque shores of the bay. Previous to its purchase for the king it had a population of seventy fisher folk, who inhabited eighteen dwellings. They sold out their rights to the intending donors, sharing the desire of the latter, as they put it, to please their sovereign, upon the one condition that the Chapel of the Incarnation, a far-famed shrine to which pilgrims from all the fishing villages of the coast resorted, should remain untouched and should be always accessible to pilgrims.

The king has placed the building of his palace and the beautifying of the island in the hands of the marquis de Viana and a Madrid architect, Senor Ripollas. The building is to be of some Arab design, following the general lines of some of the most famous parts of the Alhambra. The harbor is also to be developed so that the king can indulge in aquatic sports.

## SKYSCRAPER OF THE FUTURE.

One Hundred Stories High.



Re-enforced concrete buildings, 100 stories high, towering 1,000 feet into the air, may yet be seen by people now living, according to a prominent New York engineer and builder. Before such a feat can be accomplished, however, two great obstacles must be overcome. The lack of adequate fire protection at such a height is one, and the other is the impossibility of providing elevator service under the present systems. Even now in thirty-story buildings the weight of the cables supporting the cars is enormous, and buildings of over forty stories would pass the safety line in this respect.

When, twenty years ago, a writer described a mammoth office structure towering into the clouds his picture was but a toy for the imagination. Now it is swiftly approaching a reality. Architects are at work this moment rapidly developing plans for substantially the same kind of structure told of in his fanciful story.

"The 100-story building is sure to come," says one New York architect. "We may not be ready for it yet, but the larger and higher buildings we are certain to have in the near future. The next stage in the development will be the fifty and seventy-five story building, constructed of steel and concrete."

Already the forty-story building has been reached and passed in the completion of the Singer building. The fifty-story goal is practically here with the construction of the Metropolitan Life building, which, when completed, will be forty-eight stories high.

Less than a dozen years ago a twenty-story building was a world wonder. Now it is insignificant. The census of skyscrapers in New York, not taking into account the Singer building, gives a total number of twenty-two buildings more than twenty stories in height, and 405 buildings ranging from ten to twenty stories high.—Popular Mechanic.