

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER XV.

For a period of two weeks immediately following the death of Mme. Roupell, both Harriet and Emily Weldon remained in a state of seclusion within the chateau. By the provisions of Mme. Roupell's will, in the absence of other claimants, her fortune was equally divided between her nieces.

It was a lovely June morning. The girls had received no one since the death of their aunt. Harriet, however, did not lose sight of the fact that she owed a duty to the living. It seemed selfish and wicked to pass the precious hours in mourning for one whom she could not recall, while a fate so dreadful hung over her lover's head. Emily, who readily surmised the state of her sister's feelings, was not backward in administering what comfort she could. She had written repeatedly to Dr. Paul Mason, urging him to spare neither labor nor money in his endeavors to extricate Van Lith from his terrible position.

One morning, looking out of the window, Harriet presently espied the sturdy figure of the doctor coming at a swinging gait across the park under the great trees. He had arrived in Villeneuve by the morning train, and made a short cut across the fields, instead of coming by the road through the village.

For the first time since the death of her aunt, Emily Weldon was in tolerable spirits. The cloud which had lowered so heavily over the future seemed lifting at last. According to the report of Dr. Mason, there was at least a possibility of the terrible mystery which enshrouded all their lives being cleared away—some hope that her sister's lover, whom she believed to be innocent, would be freed from the awful charge which hung over him.

As they walked along following the path which led them through the forest of Villeneuve, much of Harriet's usual gaiety and sprightliness of manner also returned. Her cheeks regained their color with the unwonted exercise; her pulse beat quickly again; the soft June breeze fanned her brow, and her dark eyes regained their luster.

Emily was similarly affected. Her spirits rose with every step they took. She even laughed when a little rabbit, started by their approach, sat upright to look at them for a moment, and then dashed off into the underbrush. "I had to laugh," she said, apologetically, "for if ever a rabbit showed surprise, that did; why, his expression was almost human."

"It is possible he may be, according to Hans Werlow," remarked the doctor.

"And who is Hans Werlow?"

"He is a German friend of mine who has just revived a peculiar theory in regard to the soul. His idea is that the spirits of men and women who have misbehaved themselves on earth, will at death enter the bodies of animals, there to undergo a certain penance for the sins they have committed on earth. It is quite the talk of Paris, where it has become the fashion to point out an old cab horse and say 'That is Marat or Robespierre, working out his destiny!'"

Here Harriet was compelled to laugh outright.

"How I should like to meet your friend Hans Werlow! You must contrive to invite him to visit us some day."

"Perhaps I shall, when all is bright again," replied Mason, "and it shall be, if I can make it so, or rather, if Monsieur Cassagne can, for the matter is in his hands now. All I can do is to wait and hope."

"You seem to have great confidence in your friend," remarked Emily.

"Yes, I have. In times of great trouble we are apt to lean on someone. One is glad to have somebody in such a crisis who can be trusted. It is the special mission of the strong to support the weak."

"As we lean on you," said Emily, quietly, "for comfort in our hour of need."

Her arm was within his own, and her fair, white hand was temptingly near. He placed his own upon it, with a gentle, reassuring pressure. The action was eloquent of assurance that she could trust to his friendship to the last. A brother might have done the same, yet a strange thrill went through her. He saw her momentary embarrassment, and heightened color.

"For Harriet's sake and for yours," he said gently.

Then to his surprise and delight, her fingers returned the pressure of his own. They seemed to say, "I understand you."

The sun was high in the heavens. It was very warm. They were yet some distance from Vertiers. They sat down on the mossy bank under the shade of one of the grand old trees. Taking no credit to himself, he told them what he had learned of M. Cassagne's doings; how thoroughly impressed he was with the innocence of Van Lith; how indefatigably he had worked, and what skill he had displayed in unraveling as far as he had gone the cause and motive for the crime.

"I don't see much to eat around here," remarked the doctor, finally.

"No, not here, of course," said Harriet. "But there's a cottage up there by the edge of the wood, where I dare say we can get some excellent milk and perhaps some white bread. Let us go there at once. I'm perfectly ravenous."

Without giving the others time to answer, Harriet Weldon at once began to lead the way. Gathering her dainty skirts about her, she leapt lightly across a ditch which intervened between the peasant's holding and the edge of the wood, and turning around, cried gaily:

"Now, monsieur le docteur, you can exert your strength and your gallantry on Emily. You'll have to carry her across. She's the worst hand at jumping a ditch in the whole of France."

"I think you'd better trust me, Miss Emily," said Mason, laughing.

"As you will, then," she said, simply; and the next moment his arms were around her.

There are opportunities in our lives which come to us but once. Fortune raps upon our door, and failing to gain admission, flees, never to return. Dr. Paul Mason held in his arms the woman he loved best on earth. Her head reclined on his shoulder. Her heart beat against his own. Her eyes looked languorously into his. It was an unpardonable liberty for a staid scientific gentleman to take. Harriet's back was turned toward them.

"I love you," he murmured.

Then he stooped and kissed her on the lips. She flushed scarlet.

"Dr. Mason—Paul!" she exclaimed.

He sprang across with her into the field. Harriet was out of sight. She had disappeared among the trees.

"Forgive me," he cried, and he took her hand before she could withhold it. "You tempted me beyond my strength. Say that you love me just a little bit."

"Why, nonsense! As if young ladies made confessions of that sort!"

She was blushing furiously. It became imperatively necessary to pause a little to allow her to recover herself. They were entirely alone. For a brief minute they remained thus, looking into each other's faces.

Then they sauntered on, hand in hand across the plowed field, to where Harriet, with her mouth full of bread and cheese was impatiently awaiting them.

"What's the matter with you two?" she asked. "I thought you'd lost your way."

The train which bore Dr. Paul Mason back to Paris that night must have been conscious of the reluctance of one of its passengers, at least, to leave the neighborhood of Villeneuve, for never had a short trip seemed so long and tedious to a certain pleasant faced, thoughtful, middle-aged gentleman, who sat and thumped impatiently upon the window looking out upon the night.

"She has promised me," was the burden of his thoughts. "She has promised me that on the day on which Van Lith goes free, she will be my wife."

CHAPTER XVI.

More than a week had elapsed since the departure of M. Cassagne, during which time his assistant in Paris, Charles D'Auburon, had received no word of him. One morning, however, he got a laconic message over the wire: "Rue de Provence, 2 p. m. Tuesday," by which he rightly surmised that his chief would meet him at his lodgings at the hour named. Almost on the stroke of the clock, D'Auburon heard the detective climbing the stairs leading to his apartments.

"He is pretty tired," cogitated the young Frenchman. "He comes slowly."

He was right. Alfred Cassagne had no sooner entered the room than he flung himself heavily into a chair. His face wore an expression of anxiety. His dress was disordered. He seemed dreadfully fatigued and dispirited. D'Auburon hastened to relieve him of his hat and light overcoat, and to take the hot wig from his head.

"You look worn out, old fellow," he exclaimed. "Pull off your boots and coat, and make yourself comfortable."

Thus invited, Alfred Cassagne divested himself of these articles of apparel, remarking as he pulled off his boots:

"I haven't had these off for the last forty-eight hours—and they were too tight for me anyhow."

"Anything gone wrong?"

"To be brief, all our work of the past two weeks has to be done over again."

"What?" exclaimed D'Auburon. "Do you mean to say we are on the wrong track?"

"I will tell you right now," replied M. Cassagne. "It is a peculiar story. I soon settled the question as to where Graham was."

"You have found him, then? and it is not he who committed the crime? Ah, that is bad. Our theory at once falls to the ground."

"Not so fast. Don't anticipate me. However, I may tell you that Henry Graham had no more to do with the murder of Madame Roupell than you or I had."

"It is very extraordinary."

"Not extraordinary at all. But let me begin at the beginning. I left Paris having in my possession certain facts upon which I knew I could thoroughly rely. One of them was that Graham had gone to Belliers, taking his little son with him; another that he had been in correspondence with a woman there whose first name was Helene, and whom I firmly believed to be the mother of the child."

"Yes, I recollect all that; go on, pray; what next?"

"Arrived at Belliers, I instituted every possible inquiry as to whether such persons as Graham and his son were known or had ever been known there. This search occupied the greater portion of my time. I was about to despair when I stumbled across an old priest who told me that he had known the man I was in search of."

"Are you a friend of his?" asked the priest. "I am," I replied. "Then you will be shocked when you hear what happened to him. Come with me, and I will tell you his story." I followed the priest, expecting to hear that he was the inmate

of some charitable institution, or having lost his reason was confined in some private asylum. He led the way to his church, and there in the little burying ground he pointed me out a grave. At its head was a stone on which I read:

"HENRY GRAHAM,
Aged 62 years."

"What!" exclaimed D'Auburon, astonished beyond measure. "Was it our Henry Graham? It can't be possible!"

"There is not the slightest doubt about it. When I saw that tombstone, you can imagine how I felt after all the time and trouble I had given this case. It was as if the bottom had dropped out of everything. The priest saw, no doubt, that I was strangely affected. He attributed my agitation to grief.

"Tell me something about my poor old friend," I said. "I have heard that he was in very bad circumstances. Did he die poor?"

"Very," replied the priest. "But he was cared for by mother church. That stone was erected by his son. Ah! he was a sad scamp, a willful fellow, who gave his poor father no end of trouble. But that was the old man's fault, partly. He did not somehow care to have the boy with him. He lived up on the hill, himself, for years, in very good style—he had money from somewhere, though I don't know where he got it. But the child, he didn't seem to be bothered about him."

"Didn't the child live with him? I inquired—not that I cared to know, but I wanted to keep the old man talking. I thought he might possibly drop something worth having."

"No," he went on—he was a garrulous old fellow. "No, he didn't seem to care to have the child with him. Until he was quite a big boy he remained in the care of a young couple in the village. The woman, I think, grew to be quite fond of him. But he was an unruddy little rascal."

"All this is very serious. The result is that we are no further than when we started. What do you propose to do now? You're not going to give it up, are you?"

"Give it up! I wonder at your asking such a question. Certainly I shall not give it up."

"Now tell me," said the younger man, "what you propose doing? I am impatient to know."

M. Cassagne did not immediately reply. He closed his eyes like one who thinks deeply. At last he said:

"I have mapped out a plan of action. And we must either carry it out on that line, or abandon it altogether. We have adopted from the start the theory that this crime was not committed for the purpose of robbery, but in the interest of some person who in some way would profit, either directly or indirectly, by the death of Madame Roupell. If we abandon that theory we have no other to work on. After the most careful examination of all the facts and circumstances, I fail to account for the murder upon any other hypothesis. Henry Graham being dead disproves that theory so far as he is concerned; but so far only."

"Admitted; but whom have you to take his place? You must substitute someone, or your theory falls to the ground," remarked D'Auburon.

"Not necessarily," replied the detective. "We may substitute an entirely unknown person and call him X."

"Yes, that's all very well; but how to find him is the question."

"To which I certainly give you another answer. Listen attentively. I am about to begin my argument, and I want you to follow it and pick it to pieces. Commencing on the hypothesis already laid down, I shall proceed to demonstrate two things: First, the murder of Madame Roupell was committed by someone directly interested in getting her out of the way. Second, it was the work of some person who was acquainted with her affairs, either by actually having known her, or from information gathered from someone who was her intimate. You must not forget the missing will, portions of which are in my possession. You must not forget also the circumstances surrounding this mysterious crime. It was committed in the dead of night. The hour chosen by the murderer was one at which he expected to find the house entirely unprotected by the presence of men, for the butler and coachman, recollect, slept over the stables and the presence of Van Lith and Chabot in the chateau that night was a contingency totally unforeseen by him, and one he could not have prepared for. You may be sure that if he had foreseen it, he would have postponed his visit until some other occasion, for men of that stamp, though bold and unscrupulous, always take a little risk as possible."

"Granted," acquiesced D'Auburon. "Go on."

"The temporary check that our theory has received from finding that Henry Graham died before the murder was committed, in no way convinces me that he was not in any way implicated. Let us suppose that he knew of the existence of this will, which disinherited him; that he contemplated its destruction at some time and confided his plans to an accomplice; that for a long time no opportunity occurred like the one which did occur, when Van Lith left the chateau and the woman and her nieces were practically at his mercy."

"Well, I will suppose all that, if you like; but still maintain that when Graham died all motive for the commission of the crime was removed. What benefit could a third party not interested at law in the disposition of Madame Roupell's property, possibly gain by having her die intestate?"

(To be continued.)

In all France there are only 1,100 persons who are millionaires in our sense of the word (in dollars). Of millionaires in France there are about 15,000, apart from the 1,100 already counted.



Postmaster General Meyer, in his annual report, makes several recommendations for increasing the efficiency and extending the scope of the work of the Postoffice Department. Chief among these recommendations was that for the establishment of postal savings banks. Mr. Meyer would have every money order office, and such others as may be deemed necessary, designated to receive deposits in amounts of not less than \$1, but the amount of individual accounts he would limit to \$500. On these deposits interest at the rate of 2 per cent should be allowed. A material extension of the parcels post service is urged. A recommendation is also made for more up-to-date business methods and a revised system of bookkeeping. He also suggests a permanent official corresponding to the superintendent of mails or the agent of a great manufacturing corporation, who would hold office continuously through various administrations. In illustrating the growth of the postal business during the last fifty years, Mr. Meyer states that in 1857 the receipts were \$8,053,952, with a deficit of \$3,454,106, while the last fiscal year the receipts were \$183,585,005, with a deficit of \$6,653,282. He believes that by 1917 the receipts will be over \$350,000,000.

One of the features of the annual report of Gen. F. C. Ainsworth, adjutant general of the United States Army, which has called forth no little comment throughout the country, is the statement that if present conditions continue there will be nothing for the government to do to secure men for the military service but to materially increase the pay of enlisted men or resort to conscription. The report shows that the deficiency below the authorized strength of the army on Oct. 15, 1906, was 8,046, while in October, 1907, it was 20,535. Among the reasons given for this falling off is the strong competition which the government encounters from private employers, who offer higher pay and more attractive conditions.

The annual report of the Isthmian Canal Commission, recently made public, shows expenditures up to date of \$48,285,880.37, and indicates gratifying progress in the work. On June 30, 1907, the total force of skilled and unskilled laborers was 29,446, an increase of 10,000 over the previous year. The death rate among employes for several years past shows a marked improvement in health conditions, mainly due to sanitation, better housing facilities and better food supplies. The report strongly recommends the continuation of the work by the National Government direct and not through a contractor or syndicate of contractors.

Despite denials on the part of government officials, there is a persistent report that the United States Government has purchased from the Wright Bros. the control of their "heavier than air" flying machine. The Wrights have been in Europe for some time, and it was generally supposed that they were negotiating for the sale of their machine to foreign governments. Much secrecy is thrown about the subject, but it is apparent that the government is interesting itself deeply in the problem of air navigation.

At the direction of the President a special commission, consisting of Lawrence O'Murray, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Labor; Herbert Knox Smith, commissioner of corporations, and Charles P. Neill, United States labor commissioner, started for Goldfield, Nev., to investigate the labor conditions at that place and to determine whether there is necessity for the presence of the United States troops recently ordered there at the request of Gov. Sparks.

Bids to the amount of \$25,000,000 of the recent offering of Panama canal bonds have been accepted by Secretary Cortelyou at an average price of 103, and nearly all of the accepted bids are from national banks which were in a position to take out additional circulation at once. It was thought that the 3 per cent certificates would not exceed \$15,000,000. The Secretary says that the improvement justifies him in limiting both the new issues.

The opening of proposals for the \$50,000,000 of Panama canal bonds showed that the amount had been subscribed several times over, and that a good figure, well above the market price, would be realized for the securities. While the official figures were not obtainable, it was thought that the average price would prove to be about 104. The allotment of the bonds will be at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury.

ASK RELEASE OF GIRL SLAYER.

Jessie Morrison, Who Killed Her Rival, Said to Be Dying in Prison.

Interest in the tragic life story of Jessie Morrison, of Eldorado, Kan., is revived through the efforts of influential friends to secure her release from the Kansas State penitentiary for the murder of her school girl friend, Mrs. Olin G. Castle. The young woman, once known throughout the State as a beauty, is said to be dying as a result of her confinement in the woman's prison, with sixteen years of a twenty-year sentence yet to serve.

The crime for which Miss Morrison is paying the penalty was committed when she and a successful rival in love



MRS. OLIN G. CASTLE

engaged in a razor duel. Her opponent was Mrs. Olin G. Castle, who, as Clara Wiley, was married to young Olin Castle, clerk in an Eldorado store. Both girls had in turn been wooed by him.

July 22, 1900, nine days after the wedding of Clara Wiley and Castle, Miss Morrison visited the young wife and the fatal battle ensued. "I was called to the Castle home by Mrs. Castle, who commenced a furious trade against me," she says in telling the story. "She attacked me with a razor. I snatched the weapon from her and slashed her." Mrs. Castle died a week later.

Miss Morrison had three trials, in each of which she was found guilty. The first time she was sentenced to three years in prison, the second to ten, and the third time to twenty.

The prominence of the principals of the case made it one of the greatest interest throughout the country. The convicted woman's father was at one time a member of the Kansas Supreme Court.



W. R. Boggs, an American, was slain by Mexican laborers who demanded their wages.

Two bombs were found beneath the box of King Carlos of Portugal in the Royal Theater of Lisbon.

Brigands tortured Marquis Cito of Naples and forced his wife to write a check for \$20,000 for his ransom.

The death sentence of Prof. Karl Hau, convicted of murder in Germany, was commuted to life imprisonment.

Empress Alexandra of Russia became so ill that special consultation of court physicians was deemed necessary.

In the effort to gain the mastery of the Pacific, Japan forced every foreign shipping line out of the China trade.

Thousands of native troops who attacked the French forces on the Algerian frontier were driven back into Morocco.

A steamer went on the rocks of the Nova Scotia shore in a blinding storm, but the 600 persons aboard were taken off.

Oscar Erbsloeh was forced by German authorities to pay duty of \$30 on the James Gordon Bennett Cup he won in the balloon race.

Rio Janeiro received news of a Brazilian filibuster promoted in New York by American capital. Offenders captured in Rio may be executed.

Nicholas Tschalkovsky, known as the founder of the first revolutionary circle at St. Petersburg, and Mme. Breshkovskaya, one of the first aristocratic converts to the terrorist program, both of whom have many friends in America, have been arrested and thrown into the fortress of St. Peter and Paul at the Russian capital.