

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER XXI.

"Madame and Monsieur Colbert-Remplin, you say, are constant visitors at the house of the Vicomte de Valair," remarked M. Cassagne, on the morning following his adventure in the garden.

"Yes," replied D'Auburon. "They are both there nearly every night."

"Now is the time you must introduce me as the rich Swiss gentleman, prepared to take shares in the Consolidated Dock Company, or whatever you call it."

"I am prepared to do that," answered D'Auburon, "whenever you are ready to assume the part. Of course I cannot answer that the mere establishment of business relations with the vicomte will lead to an invitation to his house."

"You need not frighten yourself about that. Any one who has any money to drop on his card tables need not remain long uninvited. I have seen enough of him to know that. You had better see him this evening and say that you expect me from Berne shortly. Meantime, you must post me thoroughly on the Dock Company scheme, and when I meet the vicomte I must be prepared to endorse it."

"What is your particular object in watching Madame Colbert-Remplin through the de Valair lens? There are other houses which she visits more frequently where perhaps you would have better opportunities of watching her."

"No, not according to your accounts of the de Valair entertainments. You say that they are extended until a late hour, and that Madame Colbert-Remplin herself has become a confirmed gambler. What better opportunity could you wish for than to study a person under such circumstances? Give me the atmosphere of the gambling table to show up the points in a person's character."

"As you will," assented D'Auburon. "I should have thought, though, it would have been an easy matter for you to have attached yourself to the household of madame in some capacity; where your opportunities of studying her, and noting with whom she is in touch, would be far greater."

"You are mistaken, my friend, I assure you," replied the detective, "in your estimate of the opportunities such a course would afford. Suppose I did bribe the footman to leave, and took his place, which could, I admit, be easily done; the opportunities which would be afforded of watching Madame Remplin would not be in any measure increased. Worse, in the presence of servants she would be doubly cautious; and she could, in the capacity of mistress, impose such tasks upon members of her household as would effectually compel their absence when she wished to be entirely free from espionage. Besides, a mere servant has no opportunity to follow her and watch her in society; to note her actions when mingling with the world, to listen to her as she converses with her equals, and to read between the lines of her general conduct and behavior."

On the morning following this dialogue M. Cassagne, having met D'Auburon by appointment at his club, the two gentlemen proceeded to the office of the Mutual Credit and Trust Company, where Cassagne was formally introduced to the Vicomte de Valair, Jules Chabot, M. Colbert-Remplin and others interested in the dock enterprise.

During the conversation which ensued the broker Herr Goldstein called and brought the intelligence that such stock as he had been authorized to place upon the Bourse had found ready takers.

"It is always the way with a really sound thing," he remarked, "with good names behind it. An enterprise of that character always goes." Then he whispered in de Valair's ear:

"Who is the new man? The one in the white vest, who wears a pale green ribbon as a watch guard?"

"That is Monsieur Frederic Lazare, a rich manufacturer of Berne, Switzerland. I suppose he eschews watch chains because he gets enough of them in his business. I have just put his name down for a large block of shares. Be sure and be particularly civil to him. He is coming to the house to-night. Will you join us? We shall have a very quiet time. Positively no cards, will be the order of the evening."

Thus early in the day fortune had favored M. Frederic Lazare. Almost a stranger in Paris, the vicomte had graciously invited him to meet the vicomtesse at their house in the Avenue Wagram.

"With much pleasure," had been the formal phrase with which the wealthy Swiss had accepted the invitation. But he uttered the words from the bottom of his heart.

"I am delighted to meet any friend of Monsieur D'Auburon's," was the expression with which the Vicomtesse de Valair welcomed the manufacturer of Berne. "I spent a few weeks some years ago among your beautiful mountains, and I assure you I have never forgotten them. Ah me, but it does not really pay to sigh for vanished days; they can never come again," and a reflective look came into her fine eyes, as if some tender recollection, connected with her early trip to the land of her guest's birth, had recurred to her mind.

He recalled the sunny smile habitual with her when before her world, by saying:

"When a more advanced age brings with it such opportunities as have fallen to your lot, madame, you should not regret the flight of years; and are you to be pitied, who know seemingly how to make such good use of the world's best

things?"

It was a very small party which sat down to dinner. There were eight persons in all. Herr Goldstein, the broker, was one. Jules Chabot was also there. The banker, Colbert-Remplin and Madame Colbert-Remplin came in at the last moment. The Swiss gentleman was duly introduced to all in turn; but the fortunes of the evening placed him by the side of the vicomtesse and remote from that portion of the table where Madame Colbert-Remplin was seated.

He found in his hostess a woman of unusual conversational attainments. She was equally happy with the chat and gossip of society, or prepared to talk cleverly on deeper topics. The dinner was irreproachable. Had Cassagne's mind not been so preoccupied he would doubtless have enjoyed it. There are some dinners money will not purchase.

"We are to have no cards, I believe," said the broker; "that is the edict to-night, is it not?"

"Yes," replied the vicomtesse, "we are to have for once a quiet evening. I hope you will manage to amuse yourself. There is Madame Frohartz; she will sing you something, doubtless, if you ask."

"And you, madame?"

"Oh! for me, I have reserved a special treat for myself. I am going to show Monsieur Lazare my conservatories, while he tells me something about peasant life in the Swiss mountains."

M. Lazare wandered under the palms in the conservatory. It was but dimly lighted. A few colored lamps alone were suspended from the glass roof of the spacious building, so spacious indeed that in winter it appeared as a garden, covered with glass and so heated as to protect the rare collection of plants and flowers from the killing frosts.

There were little paths running here and there. The vicomtesse led her guest along one which took them to the very center of the building, where some lofty palms reared their heads under the great glass dome. There was a rustic bench facing the splashing waters of the fountain and sheltered from observation by a thick growth.

She began by a defense of the vicomte. Her manner was the well-bred one of a woman thoroughly accustomed to meet men of all ages and dispositions, of all minds and temperaments.

"Monsieur de Valair has gone to play cards, I feel convinced," she said, looking at Cassagne with her soft, liquid eyes, "let us sit here and talk, you and I. Do you know, it is a rare thing for me to have a quiet evening. Don't think my husband discourteous. He has some peculiar ways. He thinks he has discharged much of his duty as host when he has given his guests a good dinner, and then everybody in this house feels so much at home. The world has treated you very nicely," she continued, "has it not? My husband tells me you have done wonderfully well, and you are not yet forty, I should judge. Why don't you go into politics and make a great name? I think if I had been a man I should have done so. You should have me talk to your friend Monsieur D'Auburon."

"You think Monsieur D'Auburon has a career before him?"

The vicomtesse laughed very merrily indeed.

"A career—your friend Monsieur D'Auburon. Why, no, he is far too lazy. That is why we have had such interesting conversations. I have kept urging upon him the necessity for exertion. He maintains that work of any kind will kill him."

"And yet when he visited me in Switzerland he was the most indefatigable of climbers. I had hard work to keep up with him, I can tell you."

"I thought Monsieur D'Auburon had never been in Switzerland. At any rate I know he says he detests mountains."

"Our friend possesses the rare merit of being modest. Ask him about Chamounix and the Matterhorn when you next see him. He can tell you a few stories which would surprise you. But let us talk of more immediate things, madame. Monsieur D'Auburon is not in Parisian society, and just now I am particularly interested in Parisian society. Your own circle, for instance. You seem to have drawn around you some charming people—the Colbert-Remplins, for instance."

"You like them?"

"Yes; the husband is so well informed—I don't mean merely on matters of finance, but on all topics. I was greatly interested in what he was talking about during dinner—the dissolution of your second empire. By the way, what an ideal lady of the court his wife, with her white hair and aristocratic features, would have made under the Third Napoleon."

"Do you admire her?"

"Greatly—in a way. Is she not a woman with a history? She looks like it."

The words were spoken so quietly and naturally, that though she started with surprise at the directness of the question, the vicomtesse could not possibly doubt her guest's good faith in putting it.

"Yes," she replied, "she has a history."

"I thought I was right. I am a reader of human faces in a way. If I had been asked, I should have said, looking at her, there is one who has suffered for ambition's sake."

The vicomtesse turned around on the bench, with a half smile parting her lovely lips, and said:

"Really, Monsieur Lazare, in addition to your attainments as mountaineer, you

Swiss gentlemen seem to count that of mind-reading. Do you know what you say comes remarkably near the truth?"

Then lowering her voice, and first looking cautiously around, she added: "It is not generally known, but it can do no harm to tell you, who have guessed so near the mark—but Madame Remplin sacrificed her heart to her ambitions. You know what I mean; you are a man of the world, monsieur. There was a young man, with nothing but his profession, whom she adored, of course. There was a middle-aged man with a fortune, whom she tolerated at first, for the sake of the position he gave her and learned to like afterward, as all we poor creatures do."

"I understand. What became of the young man?"

"He was foolish. He became dissipated. He drifted away, and went to the dogs. He fell so low, that I understand he wrote to his former fiancée for money—did it frequently. A woman would not have stooped to that."

"But you have not known Madame Colbert-Remplin long?"

Something induced him to say the words and risk what followed. The effect upon the vicomtesse, indeed, seemed electrical. She regarded him for a moment with undisguised astonishment.

"How did you know that my acquaintance with Madame Remplin was a recent one?"

"Why," he answered, boldly, "you told me so yourself. You look surprised. Don't give me credit for being too great a seer. Rather impute to me an excellent memory."

"It is a great gift," said the vicomtesse, laughing. "Do you know, an idea occurred to me as you spoke just now, and it was such a funny one, that you might be someone I had known once, and were masquerading in disguise."

"What a funny idea, to be sure," replied M. Lazare, also laughing. "It would not be a bad one, would it? Ha, madame, you should try your hand at a romance. Something from your pen, I am convinced, would make a sensation."

They went in together, laughing merrily. The first person they encountered was D'Auburon.

"Ha, Monsieur D'Auburon," cried the vicomtesse, "here is your friend saying I might write a book. Let me give him some coffee, if we can find some."

Half an hour later D'Auburon and his friend M. Lazare took their leave. On their way home to the Hotel de l'Athene, where D'Auburon, in order to keep up appearances, had engaged apartments for his friend M. Lazare, the latter remarked:

"Quite a deal of progress for the first evening. Several things are quite clear in my mind."

"What are they, pray?" inquired D'Auburon.

"Beyond a doubt Madame Helene Colbert-Remplin is the Helene who married Henry Graham, and who consequently is the mother of Philip Graham, alias Philip La Seur."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, we have followed the track too closely to be mistaken, haven't we? But, in addition, there are family traits in which I cannot be deceived. The high forehead, the peculiar expression of the mouth, the general configuration, all point irresistibly to the same conclusion."

"And when we have found Philip Graham's mother, where shall we look for Philip Graham himself? I tell you you are wrong now in not doing as I said. Your wisest course would have been to have installed yourself in the household of Madame Colbert-Remplin. You will not learn of her son's whereabouts until you do."

"You seem persistent on that point," replied Cassagne, somewhat testily. "If you are so anxious that someone should go and play footman to Madame Colbert-Remplin, go and do it yourself. I tell you I shall remain where I am. I prefer to study the situation as the guest of Madame la Vicomtesse de Valair."

"And mark my words, nothing will come of it," retorted D'Auburon. "For once you are on the wrong track."

The detective smiled broadly.

"Don't get so excited, Charles," he said. "Before a week is over, you will be kicking yourself to find how greatly you have been mistaken."

CHAPTER XXII.

Two weeks passed, during which time M. Cassagne, in the character of the Bernese manufacturer, continued his visits to the de Vallairs. He was now but rarely accompanied by D'Auburon, who adhered so closely to his contention that the detective was simply wasting his time, that, as he put it, he considered it altogether wrong to encourage him in his obstinacy.

"These detectives, after all," thought D'Auburon, "are only human. He is fascinated by the vicomtesse. Every one falls into that net. I suppose one can't blame him—she is handsome."

M. Cassagne had apparently made great strides in the good books of de Valair. He spent his mornings in the office of the Mutual Credit and Loan Company, where he gave rarely valuable advice concerning the floating of the Consolidated Dock enterprise.

He passed his afternoons seeing Paris, with the vicomte and Chabot; and his evenings he divided between the vicomtesse and the card table. In a house where high play was the principal event of the evening, it was impossible not to come more or less within its influence.

Certain it is that the vicomtesse had taken a more than ordinary interest in her foreign guest. Perhaps he was a good listener, which is the sincerest flattery to your brilliant conversationalist. Anyhow she insisted upon accompanying M. Lazare to the table upon the first night, and by her presence prevented the stakes running unduly high.

She need not have been so solicitous on the Swiss gentleman's account. The

first night or two he lost quite a considerable sum, to be sure; but they had hardly been playing a week before de Valair and his friends discovered that M. Lazare knew as much as they did.

De Valair particularly was nettled to see this quiet, unostentatious foreigner come in and walk away with his money. To tell the truth, pending the floating of the Consolidated Dock Company, that article was rather scarce with him.

A boom in some of his Argentine Republic securities on the Bourse had given him, however, a welcome lift. It was quite a sum. Three hundred and fifty thousand francs had been placed to his account with the Credit Foncier. That very evening he drew half of it in cash, and came prepared to pit his fortune against that of M. Frederic Lazare.

But M. Lazare would not play. From an early hour in the evening it was observed that he kept in the outer salon. He was unusually thoughtful and reserved. He paused by the side of Mme. Colbert-Remplin. An expression of pity hovered on his features as he stooped and said:

"Will you do me a favor? I ask it for the last time. Will you go quietly home? I am willing to save you all I can."

Mme. Colbert-Remplin's white hand, glittering with jewels, trembled as it lay upon the arm of her easy chair. But her face was adamant and her voice without a tremor, as she replied:

"No, I will not stir from here. I will stay and save him. It would kill me to see him go back to the galleys."

The detective looked upon the frail, white-faced woman sitting before him, and an indescribable something flashed across his features. It was the tenderness of a supreme pity, blended with admiration.

"You can do nothing," he urged. "You had better leave him to his fate. I can feel for you, but he richly deserves it." (To be continued.)

PIRATE LAFITTE'S TREASURE.

Its Hiding Place Has Been Pointed Out in Dreams by Ghosts.

Since the French privateer and smuggler, Jean Lafitte, sailed the high seas and bought his treasures to the gulf coast and buried them, now and then it happens that some sensation arises as to their immediate whereabouts, says the Houston Post.

Thirty-four years ago the pirate of the gulf, as Lafitte was called, appeared in a dream to Dr. Beazly and, rather roughly taking him by the collar, told him to come with him and he would show him where there were gold and silver and diamonds buried. The doctor in his dream followed his midnight visitor and he directed him to a certain place in the cottage, which was then the Beazly home and occupied by the family, and designated the spot under which lies the much-talked-of wealth of the privateer.

The doctor, having the same dream, repeated twice in the same night, became wide awake after Lafitte's third visit and much interested, the result being that he did, and perhaps, too, very shortly afterward, begin digging under the house in pursuit of the treasure.

After getting to the depth of four or five feet he found nothing of any moment except a very unusual stone in this part of the world, where nothing of its kind was ever seen here.

Had he kept on possibly the treasure might have been found and the restless spirit of Lafitte, wherever it may be, might have been released from this burden of secrecy, a burden from which, seemingly, he wished to be relieved, as another visit has been made in the same house, and this time in a dream Lafitte appears in the presence of a lady, urging her to get the lost jewels, gold and silver.

After all these years Dr. Beazly has at last consented to have some one else who believes in the undertaking join him to find the treasures, and they have made arrangements satisfactory to all parties concerned, and now in a short time Mr. McKay, a banker at La Porte, being the associate mentioned, will begin operations to find the treasures stowed deep down under the old house.

Unchanged.

"You used to say I had a voice like a bird."

"So you had."

"Well, my voice hasn't changed that I can see."

"Nope, you still have a voice like a bird; a parrot's a bird."—Houston Post.

Too Late.

Friend (warningly)—You had better keep away from that frisky young widow, Green, my boy. She'll have her finger in your affairs the first chance she gets.

Victim (despondently)—She's got her finger in my engagement ring already. —Baltimore American.

No Reverses in His.

"Young man," said the stern parent, fixing the trembling sutor with a glare, "do you know enough to support yourself under reverses?"

"No, siree!" cried the youth, emphatically. "I ain't no hard-luck acrobat!"—Baltimore American.

According to the most reliable reports, there are 262,000 Sunday schools in the world, with a total enrollment of 26,000,000 pupils.

MARINE DIVER'S QUEER JOB.

Stopped an Ammonia Leak that Endangered Life and Property.

That "necessity is the mother of invention" was never more forcibly made true than recently, when a submarine diver, clad in his under-water garb, was sent into the store of Hollis & Rich to put a stop to the leak of overpowering fumes of ammonia which were filling the place, says the Boston Advertiser.

Shortly after 3 o'clock in the afternoon the cap of the big tank which is filled with the ammonia used in making the freezing mixture connected with the cold-storage plant blew off and the deadly fumes filled the cold-storage plant and gradually made their way through the walls of the store itself and up through the elevator well so that the entire building was filled with them.

The proprietors of the place were at their wits' end as to how to put a stop to the leak before their stock was damaged. Somebody in the crowd that gathered suggested a deep-sea diving outfit and Mr. Hollis jumped at the suggestion, and, running to a telephone, got a diving concern to send a man up at once prepared to make the most curious diving feat ever accomplished by any diver.

Putting on his garb, the man entered the building where it seemed that no man could live. His assistant pumped fresh air to him and the diver worked away without great discomfort, fitting a new cap on the tank.

He was inside the building less than half an hour before he returned and told the people who waited for him outside that the task was accomplished and that in a few moments the building would be free of the fumes.

WORLD'S GREATEST SHIPOWNER.

Charles Wilson, First Lord Nunburnholme, who died recently at Hull, England, was the senior partner in the largest private shipping company in the world. A native of Kingston-upon-Hull, he was born in 1833. His father, Thomas, started with one ship at the



LORD NUNBURNHOLME.

time when steam was coming into vogue. Today the Wilson fleet numbers eighty-nine steamers with a tonnage of 190,439, and a capital of £2,500,000. He sat in Parliament for thirty years, and was raised to the peerage in 1905. He is succeeded by his only son, the Hon. Charles Henry Wellesley Wilson. His daughters include Lady Cowley and Lady Chester field.

Owl Forecasts Weather.

Hancock, just over the Lebanon Mountains, west of Pittsfield, on the New York State boundary, depends upon a hoot owl for its weather reports. Every night the villagers listen for the owl, which roosts in the forests of John Taylor's farm. If the owl gives a series of long, mournful hoots, rain is expected the next day; if sharp and clear are the hoots, the weather will be clear. The owl's forecast has never failed yet.

The owl is called Big Ben. Its mate was shot 15 years ago and now adorns the show window of Frank Hadwell's store. Robert J. Gillespie of New York, touring through Hancock the other night, listened to the owl for half an hour. He says all Washington weather forecasts have been thrust aside in Hancock.—Pittsfield (Mass.) Cor. New York Herald.

Literary Exercises.

Wife (scornfully)—Oh, I've no doubt you were at the literary club reciting poetry till this hour of the night. And, pray, what were you reciting?

Husband (reminiscently)—I think wash something 'bout "Chips That Pash in the Night."—Baltimore American.

Most of a man's friends are his friends because of what they don't know about him.