

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

She set herself more firmly yet. The delicate fingers clinched convulsively upon the arm of the chair.

"Do not ask me, monsieur. My duty is plain. If you will not spare us, I will be with him to the bitter end."

"You cannot mend matters," persisted the detective, "by staying here. My men surround the house. The cordon is complete. For the last time I ask you, will you leave this place?"

"And I answer you for the last time, I will not go."

"Nevertheless, I will do what I can for you," said M. Lazare. "It would be something to you to save your own name, would it not?"

She glanced through the portiere giving ingress to the salon beyond, where Jules Chabot was just visible as he sat at the end of the long card table. His face was deadly pale. He whispered from time to time with Goldstein, the broker. Her face flushed for an instant. "What do you mean?" she ejaculated. "I am armed, madame. Take this pistol. He shall at least have a chance to save your honor."

"My honor," exclaimed the unhappy lady, recoiling in horror from the proffered weapon. "Put up your pistol. If I used it at all it would be to avenge myself on his captors. Oh! my son, my son!"

They had stepped unconsciously to the door of the conservatory. The detective turned and took her hand. His expressive face was aglow with some profound emotion.

"You have proved yourself worthy," he said. "The courage and devotion you have displayed in your hour of trial have given you a right to your reward."

"What do you mean, monsieur?"

"Come here," he said, suddenly, "come with me. I will tell you something you never knew. Something that has come to me as from the dead, to tell you that your instincts have erred, and you have been made the play of cruel, designing people."

He drew her hand within his arm and led her to the conservatory. They sat down upon the same seat where he had conversed with the Vicomtesse de Vallar.

"We shall not be interrupted here. I will tell you a story if you care to listen to it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The story," began the detective, "is of a young lady, a countrywoman of yours. It was years ago that this thing happened. She was quite handsome, very young, very romantic and foolish. When she was eighteen years of age she met an American. He also was young, handsome, but dissolute and entirely unworthy of her love."

Mme. Colbert-Remplin inclined her head almost imperceptibly. She was listening to the history of her own life. How had this man brought to light the secrets of the past which had, years ago, as she believed, been hidden by the lapse of time."

"Yielding to the American's importunities, this young lady contracted with him a secret marriage. The result of their union was a child—a boy. The marriage was concealed successfully from the young woman's parents. By the connivance of a friend and a pretended visit to the country, its consequences were also kept secret. Shortly after the birth of her child the young woman returned to Paris, where she attracted the attention of a very rich banker, who, ignorant of her past history, sought to make her his wife. It was more than probable that the lady would not have yielded to the temptation which was thrust before her but for two things, first, the discovery that her husband was a worthless, faithless fellow, second, the importunities of her parents, who at that time sustained some financial reverses. It appears that the banker held her father's obligations for an enormous amount. A condition of the marriage was that her parent should be released. A divorce was secretly secured from the first husband."

"Yes, it was to save my father," murmured Mme. Colbert-Remplin.

He went on:

"There was a little boy, as I have said, the fruit of this unhappy young woman's union with the American. This child was given out to a nurse to take care of. She was the wife of a loutish, industrious peasant, and of a peasant family herself, but she was beautiful for all that; as some of those women are. The American fell in love with her. He was called away to the United States and was absent three years. In his absence something had happened."

"What had happened?" murmured the woman beside him.

"The child entrusted to the woman's care had died. On the American's return to France, she presented her own child in its place. Her husband was dead. There was no one to contradict her."

A great sigh went up from the heart of Mme. Colbert-Remplin.

"Oh!" she cried, "can this be true? My son is dead. How have you learned this?"

"Madame La Seur, who has blackmailed you systematically, two days ago met with a fatal accident. Unable to see you, she sent you in her last moments a full confession of the imposition she had so long practiced upon you and implored your forgiveness. This was taken by her messenger to the gate where you usually received her, and was promptly seized by one of my men. Here is the confession, from which you will learn that Philip

Graham, whom you firmly believed to be your own son, is in reality the son of the peasant woman, who was the nurse of your own child, and whom Henry Graham married."

"But the extraordinary resemblance! Ah! I see it all now. Henry Graham was his father! It was easy to deceive both him and me."

"Exactly, and others have been equally deceived. Though Madame La Seur, and not yourself, was the mother of the boy, yet Henry Graham was his father. His facial characteristics and peculiarities are wonderfully reproduced in the person of his son. There is but little remaining to be told. For yourself, you have nothing to fear. This secret is known to me alone. I promise you it shall be kept inviolate. But in case the ties of long habit or old association of ideas should soften you toward this man, whom, up to a few minutes ago, you believed to be your own son, let me tell you one thing. Even you will then admit that the course of justice should be no longer stayed."

"What do you mean? I am aware that if recaptured he is liable to be returned to prison. Is there aught else?"

The detective leaned forward and laid his finger on her arm.

"Did you ever hear of the Roupell murder at the Chateau Villeneuve?"

"To be sure I did; all Paris was ringing with it."

"A defenseless woman, honored, respected, beloved, was ruthlessly murdered in her own home."

"Yes,"

"The murderer of Madame Roupell was Philip La Seur, alias Philip Graham."

He left her and went hurriedly to the door of the conservatory and passed thence into the outer salon. Jules Chabot came toward him smiling.

"We have been looking for you, Monsieur Lazare. De Vallar is playing in great luck to-night. You're not going to keep out of the way. He is anxious for his revenge."

"He shall have it," responded M. Lazare, quickly, "but I wish you would find Monsieur Colbert-Remplin and send him to look after his wife. She has fainted in the conservatory."

And then he passed on into the inner salon.

"Ah, here you are!" cried the Vicomte de Vallar. "You have come to give me my revenge, I hope."

"To any amount," replied the Swiss, and passing through the fashionable throng which surrounded the players, he seated himself at the card table.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was past three o'clock. The cordon of men in plain clothes which completely surrounded the house of the Vicomte de Vallar began to grow impatient. The first streaks of dawn were already visible in the east.

A few of the guests, among them the Colbert-Remplins, had left some time before. But the majority lingered in the inner salon watching with breathless interest the progress of a game the like of which none of them had ever before witnessed.

But four men remained at the table, for the stakes had been increased enormously. Those four were Herr Goldstein, Jules Chabot, the Vicomte de Vallar and the Swiss millionaire. The faces of the combatants, for they were nothing else, afforded an interesting study. The countenance of each painfully reflected the intense anxiety of that moment.

Two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs lay on the table. No one would yield and there was a call for yet another increase. Herr Goldstein, with a sigh, folded his cards before him with his enormous, trembling hands.

"I avail myself of the privilege," he said, "and withdraw."

Jules Chabot, who acted as banker, then handed the broker thirty-thousand francs. It was half of his original stake; the other half of which lay on the table.

"This brings our pool down pretty low," said the vicomte. "I raise it another twenty-five thousand francs."

The other two players then each placed twenty-five thousand francs in the pool. The spectators could not but notice the excessive excitement of Jules Chabot. His hands also trembled nervously. He held good cards, but if the betting continued he must inevitably drop out.

"I think it is my turn to call," he said at last. "I have my choice; I challenge you, Monsieur Lazare."

He put down his cards and spread them out before him, the vicomte, according to the rules of the game, turning his head so that he could not see what cards either of his adversaries held.

When he again turned to the table Jules Chabot had left it and M. Lazare was sitting calmly awaiting him, with a huge heap of notes and gold at his side.

It was Jules Chabot's share of the pool, which by right of his superior hand had passed into M. Lazare's possession. The vicomte was at loss just exactly what to do at that moment. He knew the kind of a hand he held was so good there were but two other combinations which could beat it. Was it possible that the man opposite him held such a combination? Or was he simply trying to frighten him into sharing the heavy stakes?

A moment's reflection decided him on his course. He had left nearly one hundred and fifty thousand francs as yet un-staked. He would bet every sou of this; perhaps M. Lazare would be unable to cover his bets, and according to the rules of the game he was compelled to do so or cease playing, for the game was what was known as an unlimited one. He look-

ed his opponent sternly in the eye. He thought he discerned signs of weakening. "Do you wish to divide, monsieur?"

"Certainly not!" came the quiet answer. "I am prepared to back my hand. It's your bet."

"I bet fifty thousand francs."

"I raise you one hundred thousand francs," and he placed that sum also on the table.

This seemed to stagger the Frenchman. It was the last money the detective had, but the other did not know it. M. D'Auburon's friend was indeed a millionaire. The Frenchman arose from the table.

"Monsieur will excuse me for a moment," he said. "I do but go to an inner room to get some more money."

He shortly reappeared, making his way through the dense and excited throng around the table, with a huge bundle of notes in his hand. They were different from any which lay on the table; they were of the currency of the second empire. The detective's eye glistened as he looked at them and his heart beat quickly, as drawing forth one hundred thousand francs from the bundle, the Frenchman covered his last bet. Then he added, as if desperately:

"And I raise it one hundred thousand francs more."

"I cannot meet it, monsieur," confessed the Swiss, "unless you accept my I. O. U."

"No, it must be cash. That is only fair. I am sorry monsieur has run beyond his bank. It is the rule of the game."

The Frenchman had his opponent fairly outbet. But the temptation to make more was strong upon him. The Swiss had already scribbled an I. O. U. for fifty thousand francs and pushed it toward him.

The Frenchman was about to play, and had raised his hand for that purpose when his eye caught the queer three-cornered piece of paper in front of him.

"I can't take I. O. U.'s," he said. "I must have absolute security."

Then they saw the Swiss take from the pocket of his vest a small locket and pass it over to the Frenchman.

"Isn't that good for something, monsieur?"

With his face grown suddenly an ashen gray the vicomte leaned over the table and almost whispered, as he clutched the locket in his shaking fingers:

"Where did you get this?"

The detective leaned forward and picked up one of the notes from the vicomte's bundle.

"From the place where you found this. Is it enough, or shall I show you something else?"

"What do you mean? Don't speak out here before everybody. Come with me."

The two players arose from the table and, passing out into the conservatory, left the money lying on the table, and a group of astonished guests looking blankly at it.

"They have both been crazy to bid like this," said one; "they have doubtless gone to make some arrangement together."

They waited for a minute—for five minutes. Still the players did not return. They were in the conservatory still, hidden from the eyes of the men. If the wondering group at the card table had been there, this is what they would have seen and heard:

They would have heard the vicomte imploring vainly for one chance; have seen him offering all he had to the Swiss if he would go back, and give him one opportunity to escape—would give him a bare ten minutes' start.

"It is more than I can do," replied the Swiss. "My men surround this house. You cannot possibly get away. Such mercy as I may, I give you. It is better than the guillotine."

He handed the vicomte his pistol, and, turning, walked toward the door of the conservatory. Only once he looked back to see the vicomte standing unsteadily by the fountain, a horrible expression upon his face.

He looked around at the Swiss beseechingly, but finding nothing there which might bid him hope, said despairingly:

"Good-by; I thank you even for this."

The Swiss walked on and reached the door of the conservatory. He leaned against the lintel of the door and waited. People were beginning to come and look for the players. The outer salon was already crowded.

Suddenly a pistol shot rang out and echoed through the whole lower floor of the house. The well-dressed, excited crowd rushed toward the conservatory.

The Swiss gentleman met them in the doorway. There was something in his face that stopped them irresistibly, on the very threshold.

"I wouldn't come in, if I were you. The Vicomte de Vallar has shot himself. He was the murderer of Madame Roupell, the old lady who lived at Villeneuve," he went on to explain.

"Oh, Monsieur Lazare!"

"I am not Monsieur Lazare; I am Alfred Cassagne, the detective."

From an early hour old Pierre had been awake, bustling hither and thither. He expected visitors, and long before their arrival, everything was in readiness for their reception.

The train from Paris was in at last, a merry group met on the platform, and its members took carriages for the chateau. The first one was occupied by Dr. and Mrs. Paul Mason. The second by Mr. and Mrs. Van Lith. The third by the mayor of Villeneuve and M. Delorme, the justice of the peace. The fourth by M. D'Auburon and M. Victor Lablanche, for the latter was a magnanimous gentleman, and could forgive a victory when a rival had fairly earned it.

It was noon. Breakfast was quite ready. The finest and oldest wines in the cellars of Villeneuve had been brought up. The cooks were growing nervous. Still they did not sit down to the table.

At last from the windows of the great drawing room they saw another carriage approaching.

"You may serve breakfast," cried the doctor. "It is he."

A very dapper, contented looking mortal alighted from the carriage and ascended the steps of the chateau, a lady on his arm, a little girl holding his other hand.

He stood confused for a moment as they all rushed forward to welcome him; but recovered immediately, he said:

"How do you do, my dear friends, this is my wife, Madame Cassagne; and here is our little daughter Celeste."

And in the midst of the congratulations old Pierre was heard to say:

"Breakfast is served."
(The End.)

When in Doubt, Study Stenography.

"When in doubt, study stenography," has been the motto of the would-be business girl for the past ten years," says Anna Steese Richardson in the Woman's Home Companion, "with the result that thousands of young women, never intended by education, training or natural ability to become stenographers, have reduced office wages and overcrowded business marts, while hundreds of their sisters, who would develop into admirable office workers, have drawn back, alarmed by the ever-increasing army of incompetents."

"There is room in the business world for the competent, earnest stenographer, and opportunities for advancement were never better nor more numerous than to-day. There is no reason at all for the existence of the incompetent worker. She will find thousands there before her."

"Please bear in mind that stenography is a trade, and you must work at it months, and even years, before you become an expert and draw the same salary an expert milliner or fitter does. There is no royal road to success in stenography simply because your parents can afford to pay for your lessons. Many of my correspondents seem to think that they can skim through a business course just as they skimmed through school, without carrying away any thoroughly grounded information. My dear girls, some of you have fooled all your teachers all the years you went to school, but you cannot fool the man who pays your salary. The teacher was paid to do the best she could by you as a scholar, but your employer will pay you to give the best possible results for his business, and if you do not give them, he will find some one who can."

Slightly Mixed.

An Australian travelling in Japan fell into a mixed company in which was an English girl and an American woman. He made himself agreeable to the American at the start, she relates in her account of "A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan," by remembering that Americans are accustomed to ride over Niagara Falls in tubs. Then he switched to the War of the Revolution.

"The whole thing was," he said, "that the colonies refused to send England troops to aid her in a foreign war, so the motherland resolved to subdue her naughty children."

"I guess you have confused it with the war in Africa," said the American. "The Boer War has been so long-drawn-out, you thought it was the same as the American Revolution."

The little English girl saw there was a misunderstanding somewhere.

"There was something about stamps in it," she suggested, weakly, "that caused some of the trouble."

"Something about stamps cause a revolution?" demanded the Australian. "Do you mean a stampede? Or merely postage-stamps? Did the rage for collecting exist in those days?"

But no one enlightened him on this, and he was left to assort history to suit himself.

The Daughter Balked.

"I thought," said old Groucherly, "that I could save money by refusing to give my consent to my daughter's marriage with young Huggins, but it's no go."

"What's the trouble?" queried the friend of the family.

"She declines to elope," explained the old man, with a large, open-faced sigh.

"SPIRIT OF THE GOLDEN WEST"

All Oregon Represented by Floats indicative of its Resources.

Portland's great annual institution, the Rose Festival, which was inaugurated last June under such auspicious circumstances, will, this coming June, be consummated on a scale so broad and grand that it will have a general appeal to the whole state of Oregon, and an individual appeal to every community in the commonwealth. The grand jubilee, which will be one round of pleasure for the whole week beginning Monday, June 1, and ending in a blaze of glory the following Saturday night, is not for Portland or Portland people alone.

One of its most spectacular and brilliant features is to be the magnificent street pageant. This is a competitive event open to all cities and towns of Oregon outside of the Rose City. There will be grand prizes, the capital prize being a princely sum in cash with a number of costly souvenir cups and other trophies of great value and beauty.

Up to the present time about 80 cities and towns of Oregon have been heard from, each showing great interest in the special state parade, and several of these towns, through their business organizations and "boosting" clubs, have sent representatives to this city to confer with the Festival management with reference to character of the floats which will make the most effective showing for their communities.

The Festival association has secured the services of a master float builder from the East, who is now here with a corps of assistants ready to advise with all who desire to enter the lists.

The railroads of Oregon, and the whole West, in fact, are planning to give special reduced rates on all lines, good for the whole week of the Festival. Special low rates from Portland to all points in Oregon.

Every town in Oregon is invited to enter some characteristic float in the "All Oregon" parade, and the Festival association invites correspondence and personal conference with cities and towns, large and small, in this all important matter.

Publications for Farmers.

The following publications of interest to farmers and others have been issued by the Agricultural department of the Federal government and will be furnished free, so long as they are available, except where otherwise noted, upon application to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.:

Bulletin No. 119.—Report of Irrigation Investigations for 1901, under direction of Elwood Mead, chief of irrigation investigations. Pp. 401, pls. 64, figs. 12. Price 50 cents. This is the third of the annual reports of the irrigation investigations of this office. It deals chiefly with the duty of water, but contains also reports from four stations in the humid states, where irrigation is not a necessity, but a means of increasing the returns from farm lands; a report on the underground water supply of the San Bernardino valley California, and the second progress report on silt measurements.

Bulletin No. 86.—The Use of Water in Irrigation. Report of investigations made in 1899, under the supervision of Elwood Mead, expert in charge, and C. T. Johnston, assistant. Pp. 263, pls. 50, figs. 18. Price 30 cents. This bulletin explains the methods in use in the arid states in the distribution and use of water in irrigation. It gives a large number of measurements made to determine the duty of water and the losses by seepage and evaporation from canals, and discusses the methods by which the water supply may be more effectively and economically utilized in the production of crops.

Bulletin No. 104.—Report of Irrigation Investigations for 1900, under supervision of Elwood Mead, expert in charge of irrigation investigations. Pp. 334, pls. 25, figs. 29. Price 50 cents. This report covers the second year of investigations relating especially to the duty of water. The reports of the field agents contain also a large amount of information on laws and customs, agricultural methods, crop returns and other subjects related to irrigation. A progress report on the quantities of silt carried by a number of southern rivers is also contained in this volume.

Idaho Corn Show.

On the 2d, 3d and 4th of December, 1908, there will be held at Moscow a state corn show under the management of the Idaho Agronomy association. Not only will there be a show, but also a rousing program, which in itself would pay the farmer to come to Moscow. The subject of corn will be taken up and discussed from a practical and scientific point of view; the soil will be considered in its different phases; irrigation and dry farming will be talked about and the various live stock, dairy and horticultural subjects will be considered.

There will be some good premiums offered to the winners of the show. Now is the time to begin preparing by planting some good corn and getting in line.

Tell your neighbors about it. Do not forget the date. Mark those days on your calendar and plan to come.

For further information address, R. E. Hyslop, Superintendent Idaho Agronomy Association, Moscow, Idaho.

Nearly a year had passed away since