

Secret of the Plundered Safe

By EMILE GABORIAU

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

As M. Verduret spoke Prosper reconsidered his resolution to emancipate himself from his guidance. He felt hope and confidence returning to him.

"If I could only be sure that you are right," he murmured.

"Obstinate man, why will you shut your eyes to the clearest evidence? Don't you understand that Madeleine knows the name of the thief?"

"Impossible."

"It is a fact; but we may be sure that no human power can extract it from her. Yes, she sacrifices you, but she has almost a right to do so, for she has sacrificed herself first."

"Alas!" cried Prosper, shaking M. Verduret's hand, "I must seem mad and ridiculous in your eyes; but you do not, cannot know what I suffer."

The red whiskered man shook his head sadly; his face altered in a moment, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"What you are now suffering," he replied, "I also have suffered. Like you, I once loved; but, not like you, a noble girl; still, I loved her. For three years I was at her feet. All at once she left me, who adored her. Then, like you, I wished to die. Neither my tears nor my prayers could induce her to come back to me. Love does not reason, and she loved another man."

On that very day Prosper, true to his word, sold off his furniture, and wrote to his friends, announcing his early departure for San Francisco. That evening both he and M. Verduret took up their abode at the Grand Archangel Hotel. Madame Alexandre had allotted to Prosper her very best room, which, however, was very inferior to his pretty drawing room in the Rue Chaptal.

About 11 o'clock, feeling the want of fresh air, he tried to open the window; it was blown too directly. But a puff of wind had entered the room and disturbed a piece of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically Prosper picked up this paper and examined it. It was covered with writing in the hand of Nina Gypsy; he could not be mistaken in the matter. It was a fragment of a torn-up letter, and if the disjointed sentences failed to convey any exact meaning they were sufficient to set his imagination to work. This is an exact reproduction of the fragment.

... of M. Raoul I have been imp...
... plotted against him of whom never...
... warn Prosper and then...
... best friend he...
... hand of Mlle. Ma...

CHAPTER XIII.

Not far from the Palais Royal, in the Rue St. Honoré, with the sign of Good Faith, is a little establishment, half cafe, half fruiterer's shop, much frequented by the clerks of the neighborhood. It was in one of the rooms of this modest tavern that on the Friday after his release Prosper was waiting for M. Verduret, who had promised to meet him there at 4 o'clock.

As the clock struck M. Verduret, who was punctuality itself, appeared. He was more ruddy than ever, and appeared perfectly satisfied with himself. As soon as the waiter had left the room he said to Prosper:

"Well, have all our commissions been executed? Have you seen the customer?"

"I gave him your letter. Everything that you require will be brought to-morrow to the Archangel."

"Then everything goes well, for I have lost no time, and I bring you plenty of news. While waiting for two of our emissaries whom I have appointed to meet me," he said, "let us occupy ourselves a little with M. de Lagors. Do you know, my dear friend," continued M. Verduret, "from what part of the country this gentleman comes from professes to be a friend of yours?"

"From the same part as Mme. Fauvel, from St. Remy," answered Prosper.

"Ah!" said M. Verduret, "that is very singular," and he whistled softly, which with him was a sign of infinite satisfaction. "I wrote to St. Remy and received answers. Ah, here is number one."

He then read:

"Lagors. Very old family, originally from Malines, settled at St. Remy about a century ago. The last of the Lagors bearing without warrant the title of count, married in 1829 Mademoiselle Rosalie Fontanet, of Tarascon; died December, 1848, leaving no male heir, but left two daughters."

"Now, what do you think of this information?" queried the stout man, with a triumphant smile.

"But why did M. Fauvel treat Raoul as his nephew?" asked Prosper amazedly.

"Ah, you mean as his wife's nephew? Let us examine note number two: 'Jules-Rene-Henri de Lagors, last of his name, died at St. Remy in a state of great poverty. He at one time was possessed of a moderate fortune, but invested it in a silk worm nursery, and lost it all. He had no son, but left two daughters, one of whom is a teacher at Aix, and the other married a retail merchant at Organ. His widow, at Montagnette, is supported entirely by one of her relatives, the wife of a rich banker in Paris. No person of the name of Lagors lives in the district of Arles.' That is all," said M. Verduret; "don't you think it enough?"

"Really, monsieur, I don't know whether I am awake or dreaming. Some people may assert that the Widow Lagors married and had a child born after her husband's death. This objection is destroyed by the age of your friend. Raoul is twenty-four, and M. de Lagors has not been dead twenty years."

"But," said Prosper, thoughtfully, "who can Raoul be?"

"I don't know. The fact is, I am more perplexed to find out who he is than to know who he is not. There is one man who could give us all the information we seek, but he will take good care to keep his mouth shut."

"You mean M. de Clameran?"

"Him, and no one else."

"I have always felt the most inexplicable aversion toward him. Ah, if we could only get his account in addition to what you already have!"

"I have been furnished with a few notes concerning the Clameran family by your father, who knew them well; they are brief, but I expect more. I will read you the synopsis of his information:

"Louis de Clameran was born at the Chateau de Clameran, near Tarascon. He had an elder brother named Gaston, who, in consequence of an affray in which he had the misfortune to badly wound two men, was compelled to fly the country in 1842. Gaston was an honest, noble youth, universally beloved. Louis, on the contrary, was a wicked, despicable fellow, detested by all who knew him."

"Upon the death of his father Louis came to Paris, and in less than two years had squandered not only his own patrimony, but also the share of his exiled brother. Ruined and harassed by debt, Louis entered the army, but he behaved so disgracefully that he was dismissed. After leaving the army he lost sight of him; all we can discover is that he went to England, thence to a German gambling resort, where he became notorious for his scandalous conduct. Later we find him again in Paris. He was in great poverty, and his associates were among the most depraved classes. But he suddenly heard of the return of a cousin who had made a fortune in Mexico; but being still a young man, and accustomed to a very active life, he purchased, near Oiron, an iron foundry, intending to spend the remainder of his life in working it. Six months ago he died in the arms of Louis. His death provided our De Clameran an immense fortune."

"Then," said Prosper, "from all this I judge that M. de Clameran was very poor when I met him for the first time at M. Fauvel's? And about that time Lagors arrived from the country? And about a month after his appearance Madeleine discarded me?"

"Well," exclaimed M. Verduret, "I am glad you are beginning to understand the state of affairs."

He was interrupted by the entrance of a stranger, a "swell" coachman, with black whiskers, shining boots with fancy tops, buff breeches, and a yellow waistcoat with red and black stripes. After cautiously looking around the room he walked straight up to the table where M. Verduret sat.

"What was the news, Joseph Dubois?" said the stout man eagerly.

"Ah, governor, don't speak of it!" answered the servant; "things are getting warm."

CHAPTER XIV.

Prosper concentrated all his attention upon this showy domestic. He thought he recognized his face; that retreating forehead and those little restless black eyes, but where and when he could not remember.

"In the first place, I must say that the position of valet and coachman to M. de Clameran is not a bed of roses. Yesterday my master walked out at 2 o'clock, I, of course, followed him. Do you know where he went? The thing was as good as a farce. He went to the Archangel to keep the appointment made by Nina Gypsy."

"Well, make haste. They told him she was gone. Then?"

"Then? Ah, he was not at all pleased. I can tell you. He hurried back to the hotel where the other, M. de Lagors, awaited him. And I have never heard so much swearing in my life. M. Raoul asked him what had happened to put him in such a bad humor. 'Nothing,' replied my master, 'except that little spritely fellow ran off, and no one knows where she is; she has slipped through our fingers.' Then they both appeared to be vexed and uneasy. Lagors asked if she knew anything serious. 'She knows nothing but what I told you,' replied Clameran, 'but this nothing, falling in the ear of a man with any suspicions, will be more than enough to work on.'

With breathless curiosity Prosper listened to this report, every word of which seemed to throw light upon past events. Now, he thought, he understood the fragment of Gypsy's letter. He saw that this Raoul, in whom he had confided so deeply, was nothing more than a scoundrel. Master Joseph continued his report:

"Yesterday, after dinner, my master doctored himself out like a bridegroom. I shaved him, curled his hair, and perfumed him with especial care, after which I drove him to call on M. Fauvel."

"What!" exclaimed Prosper, "after the insulting language he used the day of the robbery, did he dare to visit the house?"

"Yes, monsieur; he not only dared this, but he also stayed there until midnight, to my great discomfort, for I got as wet as a rat waiting for him. When he came out he certainly looked less pleased than when he went in. After putting away my carriage, and rubbing down my horses, I went to see if he wanted anything; I found the door locked and he raved at me like a trooper through the keyhole."

"Is that all?" questioned M. Verduret.

"All that occurred yesterday, but this

morning my master rose late, still in a horridly bad humor. At noon Raoul arrived, also in a rage. They at once began to dispute, and such a row! The scamp spoke English, so I could not understand them. But after a while the rascals began to talk in French again, but they only spoke of a fancy ball to be given by some banker. When Raoul was leaving my master said, 'Since this thing is inevitable, and must take place to-day, you had better remain at home, at Vesinet, this evening.' Raoul replied, 'Of course.'

"It is time to go," said M. Verduret. "Your master will want you, Joseph; besides, here is some one come for me. I will see you to-morrow."

The newcomer was none other than Cavallion, more troubled and frightened than ever. He looked uneasily around the room, as if he expected the whole police force to appear and to carry him off to prison. He did not sit down at M. Verduret's table, but stealthily gave his hand to Prosper, and after assuring himself that no one was observing them, handed M. Verduret a package, saying:

"Gypsy found this."

It was a handsomely bound prayer book. M. Verduret rapidly turned over the leaves, and soon found the pages from which the words pasted on Prosper's letter had been cut.

"I had moral proofs," he said, handing the book to Prosper, "but here is material proof sufficient in itself to save you."

When Prosper looked at the book he turned pale as a ghost. He recognized this prayer book instantly. He had given it to Madeleine in exchange for the medal. He opened it, and on the flyleaf Madeleine had written, "Souvenir of Notre Dame de Fourvières."

"This book belongs to Madeleine," he cried.

M. Verduret did not reply, but walked toward a young man dressed like a truckman, who had just entered the room. He glanced at the note which this person handed to him, and hastened back to the table, and said, in an agitated tone:

"I think we have got them now!"

Without saying a word to Cavallion, he seized Prosper's arm and hurried from the room.

"What a fatality!" he said, as he hastened along the street; "we may miss them. We shall certainly reach the St. Lazare station too late for the St. Germain train. Hurry!"

Reaching the Palais Royal M. Verduret stopped before one of the hacks and examined the horses at a glance.

"How much for driving us to Vesinet?" he asked of the driver. "I will point out the road."

"Well," said the driver, "at this time of night, in such dreadful weather, it ought to be—twenty-five francs."

"And how much more for driving very rapidly?"

"Why, monsieur, I leave that to your generosity; but if you put it at thirty-five francs—"

"You shall have a hundred," interrupted M. Verduret, "if you overtake a carriage which has half an hour's start of us."

"Whew!" cried the delighted driver; "jump in quick, we are losing time!"

And, whipping up his lean horses, he galloped them down the Rue de Valenciennes at lightning speed.

CHAPTER XV.

Leaving the little station of Vesinet we come upon two roads. It was at the junction of these two roads that Prosper stopped the hack. The driver had gained his hundred francs. The horses were completely worn out, but they had accomplished all that was expected of them; M. Verduret could distinguish the lamps of a vehicle similar to the one he occupied about fifty yards ahead of him. He jumped out, and handing the driver a banknote, said:

"Here is what I promised you. Go to the first tavern you find on the right as you enter the village. If we do not meet you there in an hour you are at liberty to return to Paris."

The driver was overwhispering in his thanks; but neither Prosper nor his friend heard them. They had already started up the new road. M. Verduret and Prosper had been running along the muddy road for about five minutes, when suddenly the latter stopped and said:

"This is Raoul's house."

Before the gate of an isolated house stood the hack which M. Verduret had followed. Reclining on his seat, wrapped in a thick cloak, was the driver, who, in spite of the pouring rain, was already asleep, evidently waiting for the person whom he had brought to this house a few minutes before.

Once in the garden attached to the house, M. Verduret looked about him to study the situation. The house occupied by M. de Lagors was narrow, two stories high, and with garrets. Only one window, in the second story, was lighted.

"As you have often been here," said M. Verduret, "you must know all about the arrangement of the house; what room is that where we see the light?"

"It is Raoul's. He is waited on by a man and his wife, who live at Vesinet; they come in the morning and leave after dinner."

"That suits our plans exactly," said M. Verduret; "there is nothing to prevent our hearing what Raoul has to say to this person who has come from Paris at 10 o'clock at night to see him. I must get a peep into that window!"

Good Time for Forgiveness.

Missionary (out West)—Did you ever forgive an enemy?

Bad Man—Wunst.

"I am glad to hear that. What moved your inner soul to prefer peace to strife?"

"I didn't have no gun."—Modern Society.

Cheerfulness makes love of life, and love of life is half of health. On the contrary, sadness and discouragement hasten old age.



Guest—I want a good porterhouse steak. Waiter—Gents what order porterhouse steak are required to make a deposit, sir.—Chicago Tribune.

Swatter—I see you are mentioned in one of the books just published. Primly—Indeed! What book? Swatter—The directory.—Chicago News.

Gabber—You ought to meet Dyer. Awfully clever imitator. He can take off anybody. Miss Duncan (wearily)—I wish he was here now.—Tit bits.

Stringem—Say, do you want to get next to a scheme for making money fast? Nibbles—Sure I do. Stringem—Glue it to the floor.—Chicago News.

At the Art Exhibition: First Judge—Dauheigh is a profile painter, isn't he? How would you estimate his work? Second Judge—By the quart.—Life.

Roosevelt and Parker outdistanced: Stella—Men are so stupid. Bella—Yes, indeed; do you suppose it would take me weeks to write a letter of acceptance?—Exchange.

Customer—The last fish I had from you didn't seem very fresh. Fish Dealer—Well, mum, 'ow can you expect fresh fish to come out o' salt water?—New Yorker.

First Physician—So the operation was just in the nick of time? Second Physician—Yes, in another twenty-four hours the patient would have recovered without it.—Harper's Bazar.

At the seaside: She—Oh! George, what lovely waves! He—Very nice; but, poor things, they're just like me—we both arrive at the shore in splendid style—and go back broke.—Judy.

Visitor (at Putin Bay)—What do you do in here all summer? Native—Loaf and fish. Visitor—And what do you do in the winter? Native—We don't fish.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

"I suppose," said the drummer, "you labor on the Sabbath, and rest the remainder of the week." "No," replied the village parson; "I try to collect my salary on week days."—Chicago News.

More Troublesome: "It's pretty hard to be worried by a lot of debts you can't pay." "Nonsense! That's nothing to being worried by a lot of debts you simply have to pay."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Diagnosis: Patient—Do you consider this trouble fatal, doctor? You know my means are limited, and— Doctor—Well, as a rule, the patient succumbs to it after about two thousand dollars' worth of treatment.—Life.

Sure enough: "Of course, I don't want to criticize, but I don't think it was altogether right for David to say 'all men are liars.'" "Well, at any rate, it was safer than to pick out one man and say it to him."—Philadelphia Press.

Artist—Have you taken my picture to the exhibition? Porter—Yes, sir; it seemed to please the gentlemen very much. Artist—What did they say? Porter—Oh, they didn't say nothing, but they laughed that 'earty."—Glasgow Evening Times.

"Did you ever make any money on the board of trade?" "Yes, I made one hundred and seventy-five dollars there one day in less than twenty minutes." "Whew! What did you do with it?" "Oh, they got it back before I had a chance to see it."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Teacher—Have you looked up the meaning of the word "imbibes," Fanny? Fanny—Yes, ma'am. Teacher—Well, what does it mean? Fanny—To take in. Teacher—Yes. Now give a sentence using the word. Fanny—My aunt imbibes boarders.—Woman's Home Companion.

"Mr. Heavyweight," said the minister, "is willing to subscribe \$10,000 for a new church, provided we can get other subscriptions making up the same amount." "Yet you seem disappointed," said his wife. "Yes, I was in hopes he would contribute \$100 in cash."—Brooklyn Life.

Jones—It is just impossible for me to keep a lead pencil. People are always borrowing, you know, and they always forget to return. Brown—Why, I never have any trouble. See, I've got a whole vest-pocketful of pencils. Jones—Doesn't that prove just what I said?—Boston Transcript.

The Elder Miss Spinster (appearing at the back door)—Tell me, my good man, are you the person who called here last week? Knight of the Road—You don't mean the bloke wot you give the 'omade pie to? No, mum, I ain't 'im. 'E left me his ole togs when 'e pegged out, that's all.—Judge.

"There's mighty few people," said Farmer Coratossel, "that knows what to do with a farm after they get one."

"I have noticed that," answered the girl with frizzes; "they always insist on filling the whole place up with corn and oats and things, when they might have such lovely tennis courts and golf links."—Washington Star.



Mrs. Anderson, Jacksonville, Fla., daughter of Recorder of Deeds, West, who witnessed her signature to the following letter, praises Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—There are but few wives and mothers who have not at times endured agonies and such pain as only women know. I wish such women knew the value of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. It is a remarkable medicine, different in action from any I ever knew and thoroughly reliable."

"I have seen many cases where women doctored for years without permanent benefit, who were cured in less than three months after taking your Vegetable Compound, while others who were chronic and incurable came out cured, happy, and in perfect health after a thorough treatment with this medicine. I have never used it myself without gaining great benefit. A few doses restores my strength and appetite, and tones up the entire system. Your medicine has been tried and found true, hence I fully endorse it."

—MRS. R. A. ANDERSON, 225 Washington St., Jacksonville, Fla.—\$2000 forfeit if original of above letter proving genuineness cannot be produced.

No other medicine for women has received such widespread and unqualified endorsement. No other medicine has such a record of cures of female troubles. Refuse to buy any substitute.

He Needed Assistance. They had been pressing him hard the whole week. The house was full of widows and pretty girls and all the other men but himself had flown because they could not stand the pace. He refused to be disturbed in his summer arrangements and so he stayed on.

Sunday night they had him in the corner and the time began to wane when some one started the game of "what you'd rather be if you had your choice." There were a lot of answers and a chorus of laughter and the usual noise that goes with summer resort pastimes, and they saved the lone man for the climax. When it finally reached him, says the New York Times, it found him not only ready, but willing.

"What would you rather be if you could have the power of changing yourself?"

"A syndicate," was his reply.

Piso's Cure is a remedy for coughs, colds and consumption. Try it. Price 25 cents, at druggists.

Davis First Ran Night Trains. Henry Cassaway Davis found his first advancement when he secured the coveted position of brakeman on a freight train on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. It was not long before he was advanced to the more responsible position of freight conductor, responsible in these days, but far more so, relatively, in those. At 24 he was again promoted, this time to the position of superintendent in charge of the running of all the trains. He introduced an innovation which marked a decided advance step in railroading. Up to that time, it had not been considered practicable to run trains at night; when nightfall came, freight trains and passenger trains alike were "held up," their journeys to be resumed only when daylight came. Davis held there was no good reason why they should not be run by night as well as by day, and proved it. His first night train from Cumberland to Baltimore marked an important epoch in railroading.—Leale's Monthly Magazine.

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