

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

The magistrate paused, and bit his lips. An ominous hum of voices filled the room and the clerk laid down his pen, seized his gavel and rapped for silence, gazing indignantly around him in the universal manner of court functionaries, as if a sacrilege had been committed.

"Have you any statement which you wish to make?" resumed the magistrate.

"Yes, I have. I was not in the room at the time of the commission of the murder. I was not even the first to enter the room. I entered the room almost simultaneously with another person, Monsieur Jules Chabot."

"Take this diagram in your hands. There is Madame Roupell's chamber. This is her sitting room. Where were you at the time the shot was fired?"

"I was just about to enter the sitting room from the room beyond, which had been my own apartment during my former visits to the chateau. It still contained some things of mine which I had not sent for. I recollect a case of pistols, particularly, which was lying on the toilette table."

"Look at the pistol shown you, and say if it is your pistol?"

"It is. It is one I brought from America. I used this pistol for gallery practice, of which I am fond."

"When did you last see it?"

"About six weeks ago. It was then in the pistol case already referred to."

"Monsieur Jules Chabot, you say, was already in Madame Roupell's apartment when you entered. Where was he standing?"

"We entered simultaneously. He was over by the other door."

"Would it have been possible for Monsieur Chabot to have taken that pistol from your case without your knowledge?"

"I cannot tell. It depends. He may have done so, but he would have had to enter the apartment by way of Madame Roupell's sitting room, because the other door was locked."

"Who locked it?"

Van Lith hesitated for a barely perceptible instant of time ere he replied: "I locked it myself, so as to be secure from interruption."

"Why did you wish to be secure from interruption?"

"Because I did not wish it known that I was in the chateau."

"Why did you not wish it known?"

"That is one of the questions I must decline to answer."

The prefect and the judge exchanged significant glances. The latter had noticed the prisoner's hesitation when stating that it was he himself who had locked the door. "That is the first lie he has told," thought M. Bertrand, "and it is told to shield someone. He has an accomplice, evidently." Then he said out loud:

"I have no more questions to ask. The examination of the prisoner is concluded. You will retain him in the closest custody, and allow no one but his counsel or physician to see him under any pretext whatsoever."

Jules Chabot was the next witness to be examined. His testimony was substantially the same as contained in the prefect's report. He swore positively enough to finding Van Lith in Mme. Roupell's chamber immediately after hearing the report of the pistol. He also swore that Mme. Roupell and Van Lith were on bad terms, and gave, though with a well-assumed show of reluctance, a pretty full recapitulation of the facts which had brought about the final quarrel between them.

At this stage of the examination, the prefect was seen to whisper something to the judge, and the latter then asked:

"You testify that nearly an hour elapsed between the time when you were shown to your room and the firing of the pistol. The condition of your bed proves that you had not slept in it, and when you reached Madame Roupell's chamber you were fully dressed. Why did you not retire to rest?"

"Simply because I was not sleepy," replied M. Chabot, coloring somewhat, and fidgeting his long mustache nervously. "I was busy writing."

"What were you writing?"

M. Chabot hesitated and stammered.

"If you do not immediately answer my question, I shall have no alternative but to commit you, monsieur," said the judge, in a stern voice.

Jules Chabot hesitated no longer. Drawing a letter from his pocket, he handed it up to the bench.

"It is a confidential communication addressed to a lady," he said, "and I trust you will respect it."

M. Bertrand could not but with difficulty repress a smile as he ran his eyes rapidly over the letter, which was nothing less than the draft of a written proposition of marriage to Miss Harriet Weldon. It had evidently been the subject of much care, as the frequent erasures and inter-linearations showed. It was couched in flowery and high-flown language, and full of the most extravagant expressions of adoration. The most peculiar thing about it was the writer had evidently been uncertain as to which of the two young ladies he should ask for, as the words "Miss Harriet Weldon" had been first written and then scratched out, as if he thought there was no hope for him in that direction, and "Miss Emily Weldon" put in their stead. Victor Lablanche here again whispered in the ear of the judge of instruction and the latter said:

"I would ask you if you were occupied during all the interval which elapsed between the time of your retiring and

bearing the report of the pistol, in writing this letter?"

"I was not so engaged during the entire time: the point of my pencil broke, and I had no penknife with which to re-sharpen it."

"You were right, monsieur le prefect," exclaimed the judge, with a meaning glance at the official. "How long a time elapsed between the breaking of your pencil and the report of the pistol?"

"About five minutes, I should say. Probably longer. It might have been more and it may have been less. I could not say for certain."

"The letter you have shown me," said the judge, "I think sufficiently explains why you did not retire to sleep. You were the invited guest of Madame Roupell, and occupied the room shown you. By the by, at which door did you go into Madame Roupell's room? The one which led to it from your chamber?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, that was locked. I had first to go into the corridor."

"That will do, Monsieur Chabot, you can go," said the judge, and the Frenchman, considerably relieved, bowed and retired.

The servants were then called, and they swore positively that none of them had admitted Van Lith into the chateau, and had no knowledge of his being there until they saw him in Mme. Roupell's chamber. The prefect here stated his discovery of the bruised vine leaves, and the open window, and gave it as his opinion that the entry had been there effected.

The examination of the local physician and Dr. Paul Mason then followed. They both testified that Mme. Roupell had died from the effects of a pistol bullet entering the base of the brain. This concluding the proceedings, the judge of instruction then committed Van Lith to the prison of La Mazas.

"Shall I keep Monsieur Jules Chabot under surveillance?" asked the prefect, when all had retired.

"I see no occasion for it," replied M. Bertrand. "He may be a fool; but he doesn't look like a murderer."

But Victor Lablanche still adhered obstinately to the opinion that M. Chabot would bear watching. Slipping from the room he instructed one of his most reliable secret agents to keep him in sight until further orders. He had said nothing about his discovery of the open door. He would keep that to himself. It might lead perhaps to one of those grand coups for which he was so famous.

Another thing the prefect was dissatisfied with. Upon the certificate of the physicians that the Milles, Weldon were prostrated by the death of their aunt, they had not been summoned before the tribunal—though later they would probably be called upon to testify. The prefect considered this as ill-timed leniency, but there was no help for it. The certificate of so famous a physician as Dr. Paul Mason had its weight with the judge of instruction.

CHAPTER VI.

Dr. Paul Mason found opportunity to whisper in Charles Van Lith's ear, as he was led away:

"Do not despair. I will leave no stone unturned to establish your innocence." Then, as he wrung his hand, he added, "Oh, if you would but speak."

Van Lith said nothing in reply. He was so overcome with the horror of his situation that he could barely stammer out his thanks for the doctor's kindness. Overwhelmed by the magnitude of the misfortune which had overtaken him, he suffered himself to be conducted unresistingly to that sombre vehicle, in which, closely barred and huddled together like sheep, prisoners were carried to the dark and gloomy cells of La Mazas. Paul Mason immediately took a cab to the Rue de Reversy, where he ate, though sparingly, of the breakfast which his housekeeper, Louise, had long ago prepared against his coming.

"Well, Madame Roupell was murdered this morning at the Chateau Villeneuve," he said at last.

The old servant started violently. She set down the pot from which she was about to pour a fresh cup of coffee for the doctor, and trembled from head to foot.

"Is it possible?" she ejaculated.

"It is not only possible, but, alas, it is a fact," repeated the doctor; "and as if that was not trouble enough in one day, my friend Monsieur Charles Van Lith has been arrested, charged with the commission of the crime."

At this additional intelligence the old woman's eyes nearly started out of her head.

"Monsieur Charles! How can he be guilty of such a thing? He, so gay, so cheerful, so polite to everybody! I will never believe it."

"He was in the chateau last night, and positively refuses to tell even me how he came to be there. But there is a report of the whole affair in the morning paper. You can read it for yourself."

The old lady put on her glasses, and simply devoured the paper which the doctor handed her. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"Monsieur Van Lith's silence has something to do with one of the young ladies, you may depend upon it."

Louise pointed to a certain paragraph in the report of the tragedy, which had already, in the shape of an "extra," found its way thus early into print:

"It was transpired that a light was burning in the chamber of Miss Harriet Weldon, a niece of the murdered woman, at a late hour. It would not surprise us to learn that this young lady ultimately proved to be the 'woman in the case.'"

"You give me credit for too much sharpness, you see," said Louise. "It is the idea of the reporter, not mine."

"Ah," replied the doctor, "those reporters are very sharp fellows. Some of them are as good as trained detectives."

"They are good enough in their way," remarked the old housekeeper, as she began to clear away the breakfast dishes, "but could they begin to compete with such men as Marmand, Bassaud or Alfred Cassagne—especially Cassagne? Oh, he is as sharp as a needle; nothing escapes him."

"Tell us something more about this Alfred Cassagne. Why do you mention him, particularly?"

"First, because he has a good reputation, and secondly, because I happen to know something about him, monsieur," replied the housekeeper, highly gratified at being thus interrogated. "He is one of the most famous detectives in Paris, and he has no need to be a detective at all, or anything else, for that matter, as he has plenty of money to live upon. Ah, he is grand. It is a passion with him. When anyone else fails to get to the bottom of a mystery, they call in Monsieur Cassagne, and he always succeeds."

"Always?"

"If he does not it is because the case is hopeless, has no bottom. He is very shrewd. He adopts a hundred disguises. An Englishman stops you on the street at nine o'clock and asks you the way. It is Monsieur Cassagne. At ten, a German shoemaker, leather apron and all, inquires what time it is. It is Monsieur Cassagne. A little further on a crossing sweeper begs for a few sous. It is Cassagne again. Finally, you see him outside one of the cafes, sipping his chocolate, only you don't recognize him, for he is a merchant or perhaps a swell of the boulevards. Ah, but he is a wonderful man, is this Alfred Cassagne?"

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Certainly, a cousin of mine once worked for him. I have been in his house. It is the Rue de Petites Champs. Thirty-six is the number."

"I intend to employ a detective on this matter," said the doctor, presently, "and as I don't know one from another, I am inclined to say, 'Why not your friend, Alfred Cassagne?' Slip on your bonnet and shawl, Louise. I want you to take a message to the telegraph office."

The doctor took a blank from a drawer and wrote his dispatch.

"Take that," he said, handing it to the housekeeper. "It is a message to your wonderful Cassagne, asking him to meet me to-morrow morning at the Chateau Villeneuve. We shall be on the ground there, and he will have a chance to show what he is made of."

The old lady's face wore a beaming expression. She put the telegram in her pocket as if it were some precious jewel.

"You will not regret it, monsieur, for, as I have assured you, you will find Monsieur Cassagne a very clever person."

Already in her simple mind, the gloomy gates of La Mazas had swung back upon their massive hinges, and the young friend of her kind master stepped forth, a free and happy man.

It was a beautiful morning; the birds sang melodiously in the trees which surrounded the Chateau Villeneuve. Dr. Mason had arrived from Paris on an early train, and was now pacing impatiently to and fro on the broad terrace in front of the house. In his hand he held a telegram which he had received from M. Cassagne, the detective. He was glancing at it for perhaps the twentieth time, when one of the windows of the morning room, which was on a level with the ground, suddenly opened, and Emily Weldon stepped out upon the terrace. She was pale even to ghastliness. Notwithstanding the fatigues of the previous day, she had passed a sleepless night.

The upper chambers of the chateau had all been placed under seal. Under the inexorable criminal laws of France, she had been denied even the consolation of watching by the body of her benefactress; and her excited condition of mind precluded her from taking that repose of which she was so much in need.

Harriet, on the contrary, to whose softer nature the relief of tears had not been denied, had, toward daybreak, fallen asleep on a sofa. Utterly worn out by the events of the last twenty-four hours, she now slumbered as peacefully as an infant, which, excited by some childish tribulation, sinks at last to rest in its mother's arms.

Emily advanced a few steps along the terrace toward Dr. Mason, who hastened to meet her. Her first question was as to whether M. Cassagne, the detective, had yet arrived, for the doctor had telegraphed her that they would both be there in the morning.

"I am expecting him every minute," replied Mason. "His telegram reached me late last night at my house in Paris. I should gather from it that he is a very peculiar personage indeed. Just look at that, and tell me what you make of it."

She took the telegram and read it, a faint smile upon her lips.

"It certainly is a curious production. He seems to put more stress on how he shall be fed than anything else."

"Will he at Villeneuve at nine morning please have omelette au rhu and truffles, breakfast will bring my own coffee."

"ALFRED CASSAGNE."

"I am told he is an odd creature," observed the doctor, "but also that he is one of the most remarkable men in his line that has been known since the days of Fouche. It is very strange that he does not come. It is now nearly half past nine."

(To be continued.)

Value of Humus.

The principal source of nitrogen in the soil is organic matter. We must have the nitrogen to produce the crops. It is necessary to promote growth. It is an expensive food—probably the most expensive of all the food elements needed by the plants. It is estimated that if the nitrogen had to be purchased to produce a bushel of corn, it would cost about 24 cents. However, if the organic matter is kept sufficient in the soil, it can be supplied without cost.

Generally speaking there is enough potash in the average American soil to produce corn for thousands of years, but as a rule it is not available so that plants can use it, as food. Many of the insoluble mineral elements are made soluble and available for the plant's needs by decay of the organic matter in soils. It requires humus in the soil to make these insoluble elements available.

It is then plain that soils that have plenty of humus are not only rich in nitrogen, but in the decay of the humus the supply of available mineral elements is also increased. Soils are ready to farm much earlier in spring that are rich in humus than those that are deficient in it. This humus is what gives the soil its dark color, and it is a fact that anything dark in color absorbs heat more rapidly than does a light color. Soil containing humus will dry out sooner and be ready to cultivate sooner in the spring than soil that has no humus.

Moisture is better retained in a soil that has the proper amount of humus than in one that is devoid of it. In other words, soils that contain humus are rich in available plant food, are ready to work early in the spring and have moisture to keep the crops growing and producing; while, on the other hand, soils that are without humus dry out and are unfit for cultivation.



Feeding for Good Butter.

An experiment on the effect of wide and narrow rations for milk cows has been made at the Pennsylvania station. Nine Guernsey or grade Guernsey cows about sixty days from calving were used. Corn, stover and chopped wheat were fed with different amounts of Buffalo gluten meal, cotton-seed meal and linseed meal, so as to give rations with certain nutritive ratios.

Seven of the nine cows used in the trial required less digestible food for a pound of butter in the periods when the rations richer in protein were fed. There was a small apparent increase in the efficiency of the food in the periods when the narrower rations were fed (i. e., rations rich in protein). After deducting the cost of the food there was also a somewhat larger net profit from feeding the rations richer in protein. The percentage of fat was better maintained and, in fact, increased slightly in the periods when the richer rations were fed.

Our markets are treated to entirely too much poor butter. The conservative dealers will not deal in butter greasy, and they complain that really first-class butter must of necessity remain high in price, because so little good butter is to be found in the markets.

Uncle Sam has a worthy movement on foot and is making a great effort to save to the people what should be one of the cheapest possible kinds of food. Already he has given the subject much attention, and a Department of Fish Hatcheries has planted in waters all over the country millions of spaw and fingerlings.

Destroying Thistles.

No weeds can thrive if kept down. Some are annuals, coming from seeds, and every seed that germinates ends that particular plant if the farmers will but stir the soil when such weeds are in their first stages of growth. Even the Canadian thistle, which is one of the most persistent pests known to farmers, though growing from both seeds and roots, can be destroyed if the attempt to do so is made with effort and determination. Known as the Canada thistle, the weed is really a native of Europe, being early introduced into Canada and spreading into every portion of the United States. Experiments made at the Idaho station show that it is not as difficult to get rid of it as has been supposed, although laws passed for its destruction by several States have been of no avail. It spreads slowly compared with some weeds, due principally to lack of fertility in the seeds, most of the seeds being light, only the heavy ones germinating, and they are not carried far. But its progress by means of long, white root stocks is rapid, a large field being covered in that manner in a few years, and it then assumes a strong hold on the soil. It is a perennial, with slender stems, the leaves being prickly, with the heads congregated on the top of the stem, while the flowers are rose purple. It may be carried from one point to another in hay, on the tops of freight cars or by various other modes.

Football was a crime in England during the time of Henry VIII.

FARMS AND FARMERS

How to Avoid Dyspepsia.

All who suffer from poor digestion should wear a ten-inch width of flannel bandage next the skin, placed fairly tight around the body over the stomach. No liver or digestive pills or pepsin preparations help the stomach a twentieth part as much as this flannel prescription. A poor circulation in the stomach, causing that chilly, "utterable" feeling, is at the root of half the indigestion that mortals are heir to. That is why hot water drinking gives relief. It helps the circulation. A flannel bandage worn day and night all the year round cures the faulty blood circulation of the stomach; consequently it cures dyspepsia.

Five hours interval between meals, avoiding fried foods, made dishes and mixtures and observing three or four "lenten meals" in every week, are golden rules for good digestion.

A good dinner at night is necessary for those whose pleasure or work keeps them up very late. But for ordinary folks who dine at seven o'clock and go to bed about 10:30 only a light, wholesome repast should be taken at the end of the day, when the muscles and nerves are more or less exhausted. A "fried stomach is a weak stomach" is a golden rule to remember. Yet one often hears people say: "I've been rushing about all day and am tired to death. I must have a big meal to make up for it." You may put the big meal into the stomach, but you cannot make the stomach digest it.

A belief lives strong in the hearts and minds of the majority of mankind, including persons of weak digestions, that a quick, brisk walk taken before a meal gets up an appetite and helps the stomach to digest the food. Now, this is exactly what it doesn't do. Exercise spreads the blood throughout the body. For the proper digestion of food the blood is needed in the stomach. Few realize this important fact.

After a long, exhausting walk, bicycle spin, or any severe physical or mental strain, take a good half-hour's rest in a comfortable arm-chair, or lie on a sofa before you eat a substantial meal.

A NEW IMPLEMENT OF WAR.

An Odd Arm Invented for Cavalry Use Has Many Good Features.

A Kansas City man has invented a new rifle intended for cavalry use. It differs from the ordinary arm in four distinct points. One half of the barrel is back of the trigger, thus placing more weight on the shoulder. It can be operated with one hand and can be more firmly braced against the shoulder than in the ordinary rifle now in use. A small rod connects the hammer and trigger. Otherwise the mechanism is similar to other rifles.

"I got the idea," said McHenry, the inventor, "while hunting buffaloes on the plains of Nebraska in the sixties, when I was a hunter and scout for a Union Pacific survey party. I was then a 15-year-old boy, but I've been thinking about my idea ever since. I had a wooden model of the gun finished just before the flood four years ago. It was lost in the high water, but I have since made another."

"I talked with Buffalo Bill about my gun," continued the inventor. "He was delighted with it. He said that ten cavalry would be equal to 100 if armed with it. Army officers at Leavenworth were also favorably impressed with it."

Mr. McHenry's rifle will shoot twenty-four times. The ordinary "repenter" shoots sixteen times. He has been advised that three patents may be secured on the rifle.—Kansas City Star.

For Summer Vacation Use.

"That idea is novel," said Thomas A. Edison of a new aeroplane. "It is a striking idea. I have seen nothing to beat it since last summer."

"Then a young man showed me an engagement ring that he was going to patent. 'But,' said I, 'examining the very ordinary-looking circuit, 'what is there patentable about this?'"

"It is adjustable, sir," said the young man proudly.

Too Plain.

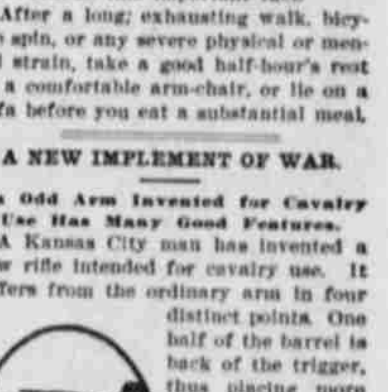
"You see," he explained apologetically, "I didn't know just what to do."

"But," protested his friend, accusingly, "surely you saw your plain duty in the matter."

"No doubt I did see it and I guess because it was so very plain, it didn't attract me."—Philadelphia Press.



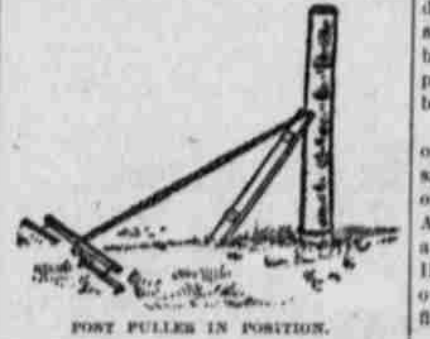
The Emily Doctor



Post Puller.

An easy and practical method of pulling fence posts by which all digging and hand labor are eliminated is shown in accompanying cut, from the American Agriculturist. Take a plank four feet long and one foot wide and make a V-shaped notch in one end, nailing on several crosspieces to prevent slipping. This plank is used to change the horizontal draft to the vertical.

Place one end of chain around the post close to ground. Incline the plank against the post so the lower end of the plank will be about one and a half or two feet from the base of the post. Place the chain in the notch of the



Utilizing Sources of Profit.

There is no period on a well-regulated farm during which idleness should exist. Stock raising combines many occupations. The dairyman who has a large herd must rise early and work until darkness returns. The many little details will keep him busy, and there is always something to be done, yet there are hundreds of farmers who have but animals because they object to the work that necessarily follows the keeping of the stock, but such farmers lose much time during the whole year, and also deprive themselves of that portion of the profits which are made by utilizing the home-grown products that are not salable in any form unless consumed by stock. They overlook the fact that every pound of material grown on the farm that can be used for the production of some higher-priced product increases the profits by cheapening the cost, as well as the saving of labor in hauling and shipping bulky products to market. One operation on the farm leads to another in regular rotation, and just the same as spring seeding leads to harvest, so does the storing of the products on the farm lead to the employ-

Elevated.

Footnote—What's become of that company your brother formed for the purpose of elevating the stage? Miss Sue Brette—Gone up!—Yonkers Statesman.