

The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

CHAPTER I.

It was a fine night toward the latter part of May. During the daytime there had been clouds over Paris; but on the approach of evening the sun had come out, and descending in a blaze of glory, tinged the housetops with a fiery glow and bathed the waters of the Seine with a golden, mellow light. The small suburb of Villeneuve, distant from the French capital but fourteen miles, shared this generous halo of brilliant coloring. It lacked just fifteen minutes of eleven o'clock when the moon, which was nearly at the full, rose with slow and majestic motion above the horizon, and hung suspended between earth and heaven like a huge silver lamp. The great trees which almost surrounded the chateau Villeneuve cast deep shadows. From the chateau itself, the light of a solitary lamp, falling to a few mere twinkling rays, shone fitfully. It came from a window in the left wing of the building. Remote from the great metropolis, the hush of a profound peace was here upon everything, save when stirred by the soft breeze from the south, the leafy branches of tenderest green rustled and moved gently to and fro.

In the deep shade of an enormous oak which seemed to keep watch and ward over the sleeping inmates, stood a young man named Charles Van Lith, to whom every familiar object but conjured up to his ardent imagination the interior of that faintly illuminated apartment. This silent watch continued to gaze for some moments in the direction of the chateau. His demeanor was that of one undecided as to what course to pursue. Twice he stepped from the shadow of the tree and placed his foot upon the gravel walk, and as many times retraced his footsteps.

At length he issued forth more boldly, though not without caution, to prevent the crunching of his shoes upon the gravel, and stood beneath the window. Picking up two or three small pebbles, he threw them against the glass. His heart beat somewhat faster than its wont as, after the third essay, a girl of about nineteen years of age, who had been reading by the light of the lamp, left her seat and, opening the swinging casement, looked out upon the night.

"Who is there?" she asked, in a tone which indicated some alarm, but singularly sweet and musical.

"It's I—it's Charles," replied the young fellow; "don't be frightened. I must see you, if only for a moment. I am going away. I am leaving France. I return to America to-morrow."

"Oh, nonsense," exclaimed the girl. "You are saying this just to try me."

"I am not, upon my word, Harriet," answered Van Lith. "My passage is already taken. I sail from Havre to-morrow afternoon."

"Why did you not let me know earlier?" she asked.

"I was afraid to write. You know your aunt strictly forbade it. But, Harriet, can't I get in, if only for a few moments?"

"I really don't see how you can—"

Harriet Weldon began, when the faint remembrance died away upon her lips.

Seizing the strong stem of a thick vine which ran near the window, and assisted by the trellis work, the young athlete below commenced an ascent which to an older man would have proved an impossible feat. In a few moments his hand was on the window sill and the next instant he had leaped lightly into the chamber. Harriet, the first raptures of their meeting over, begged him to be gone; but he, sitting beside her on the low window seat, urged his plea for further time so eloquently that she yielded, and could not find it in her heart to dismiss him at once. The lovers, too, had a hundred confidences to interchange. Harriet told Van Lith how, since his quarrel with her aunt, the persecutions of a certain M. Chabot had become well-nigh intolerable. She was afraid, moreover, that M. Roupell favored his suit.

"And now you are going to America, Charles, and there will be no one to stand between us. I am sure the man has not even the excuse of loving me. It is my duty he is after. He is, no doubt, aware that Madame Roupell has made a will in favor of Emily and myself."

Charles Van Lith could only clench his fist in impotent rage. To the house where he had once been an honored and welcome guest he now had to come like a thief in the night to seek a farewell interview with the only being on earth who yet loved and trusted him. In his mind there was a burning sense of injustice. The cold and severe tones in which M. Roupell had dismissed him seemed still ringing in his ears.

"Do not go," pleaded Harriet. "I am certain that it will not be long before my aunt will relent; that, after all, she really thinks a great deal of you; stay, and I will myself go to her on the first opportunity which offers and plead your cause."

"You are more hopeful than I am," replied Van Lith, bitterly. "If I had been treated with any show of justice, why, I would not care. But your aunt is prejudiced against me. I am well aware that Monsieur Chabot has sought to undermine her confidence in me, and he has succeeded. I tell you, Harriet, when I think of all these things it makes me a desperate man."

He had been pacing the floor restlessly with long, impatient strides. His face was flushed with anger. With the memory of M. Roupell's merciless treatment aroused anew within him, he could hardly restrain himself.

"She is worse than unjust," he continued; "she has deliberately opened her ears to these tales of Chabot's and as deliberately shut them to my explanations. She has magnified my smallest weaknesses into great faults."

"You must not blame my aunt to me, Charles. Recollect that to us girls, at least, she has ever been good and kind. I wonder what would have happened to us when mother died, if it hadn't been for her? Few women would have crossed the ocean as she did to fetch us, for her dead sister's sake; and she has been as good as a mother to us ever since. Na-

Charles, you mustn't say a word against Aunt Ruth in my hearing."

"Harriet," he said, "you are quite right to stand by her. It would be but a poor return on your part for all her kindness to you if you didn't; but in wronging me she has wronged you as well. In opposing our union, she not only wrecks my happiness, but yours."

He was quieter presently. In the softening influence of Harriet Weldon's presence his evil genius seemed to desert him. The angry expression of his features lessened. They sat side by side and began to talk. Still pleading with him, Harriet Weldon strove, to persuade her lover to abandon his intention of immediately leaving France.

"I have given you all my heart," she said, tearfully, "and now you are going away, perhaps forever—but hark, what sound is that?"

She leaned out of the window and listened intently for a moment. The sound of wheels on the carriage drive was distinctly audible. She rushed to the mantelpiece where a little clock stood ticking away the precious moments.

"It is long past twelve," she exclaimed. "That's their carriage we hear. They've come back from the opera. O, Charles, go, go, I beg you, while you can get away."

Van Lith turned at once to go. For a moment only he held her to his breast. Into that brief interval of time were compressed a hundred different emotions, which stirred him as he had not been stirred for many a day.

"I cannot, yet I must leave you," he cried.

He bowed his head a little and kissed her twice upon the lips. She trembled violently, but thrust him away from her, repeating in tones of entreaty:

"Be careful! O, do be careful!"

He was himself once more. He placed the half-fainting form of the girl upon the sofa, and hurried away. He was about to commence his descent from the window, and had already swung the old-fashioned, diamond-paned sash half way open, when Harriet, in whose agitated mind the fear of discovery overcame all feminine weakness, rushed forward, and, catching hold of his arm, exclaimed:

"You are too late! Come back. Be quick, or you will be seen."

Van Lith had just time to close the window when, through a chink in the curtains, he saw a hooded barouche, drawn by two powerful horses, sweep rapidly around the bend of the avenue and draw up at the main entrance of the chateau. From the vehicle there alighted a gentleman of about thirty years of age. With a great show of attention he first assisted a young lady, evidently still in her teens, to descend. He then with much solicitude placed his nattily gloved hand at the disposal of the third occupant of the carriage, a gray-haired lady, evidently well advanced in years, for she leaned heavily upon the shoulders of both her companions. She shivered slightly as she stood upon the gravel path in the moonlight, notwithstanding that the night was warm.

There were traces yet of extreme beauty in this woman's features, who, as Sarah Graham, had once been the toast of the club rooms in fashionable New York. It was still the face of a refined and cultured American lady. The nose was thin and aquiline, and an expression at once haughty, yet kindly, withal, sat upon the mobile, nervous lips. Jewels flashed upon her still firm neck and her little wrists. She held herself erect and her eyes flashed proudly, as she looked upon her splendid home.

"Emily, my dear, I have left my shawl in the carriage. Will you please hand it to me? Monsieur Chabot, your arm."

The younger lady at once sprang lightly into the carriage, and returning with the shawl, wrapped it closely about her aunt. There was an inexpressible tenderness in the action.

"How thoughtless of me, dear. You might have taken cold. Don't ring, Monsieur Chabot. I have a latch key. Ah, here is Pierre. Pierre, are you sitting up? I hope there's some supper ready, for I'm hungry as I can be. Come, aunt; let's go in."

But something seemed to have attracted M. Roupell's attention. She withdrew her hand from the arm of her male escort, and adjusting her monocle, a dainty toy of gold and ivory, gazed steadily at the upper windows of the chateau.

"Isn't it rather strange, my dear, that there's a light in Harriet's room? I thought she was going to bed. If her headache was no worse than that, she might as well have accompanied us this evening. When I was a young girl, Monsieur Chabot, it would have taken something more than a headache to keep me away from the opera."

M. Chabot smiled, and showed his white teeth pleasantly.

"Madame can still teach us inexperienced people how to enjoy life," he remarked, gallantly. "It remained for the United States to send to France another Nimon D'Enclos, to prove that charming women never grow old."

"Really, Monsieur Chabot, I am overwhelmed. For simplicity and naturalness in compliment, my dear Emily, let me recommend this flatterer."

M. Roupell's favorite pastime was to make M. Chabot believe that his exaggerated praises were as a great lady struck home. One of her sayings was, "I like Monsieur Chabot. He is such a sincere humbug," but she must have really been a little moved on this occasion, for her smooth, white fingers on the Frenchman's coat sleeve tightened their pressure and her face lightened wonderfully.

Harriet, sheltered by the window curtains, looked at Van Lith, who gazed at her teeth so furiously that, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation, the girl could not forbear laughing. M. Roupell below was still smiling at the Frenchman's compliment.

"Let us go inside," she said, at last. "No doubt we shall find some supper somewhere. Poor Harriet! I trust she is not sick. I will go right upstairs and see how she is."

"That's comforting tidings, anyway," thought Van Lith, who had again cautiously opened the window, and to whom,

as he peered through the curtains, every word uttered by the party below was distinctly audible. "Look here, Harriet, what on earth am I to do? Madame Roupell is coming to see how you are. In a minute she will be here."

Harriet's cheeks blanched for a moment, for from her station near the door of the chamber she could already hear M. Roupell's footsteps ascending the stairs.

"Come here," she cried to Van Lith, frantically. "There is no one sleeping in your old room. Run across the hall quickly, and hide yourself there until I call you. I will lock you in, so my aunt will have to go the other way. You must return through her sitting room to the corridor. You can do it easily, for she is a sound sleeper."

Van Lith did as he was directed. Harriet had barely time to turn the key on him, return to her chamber, seat herself and snatch up a book, when her aunt's footsteps were heard in the corridor, and a moment later the old lady entered the apartment.

"Awake yet, my dear child? Can't you sleep? Oh! You are thinking of that young scamp I'm afraid. Well, I wouldn't if I were you. He isn't worth it. Besides, if you don't go to bed earlier where will the roses go to?"

She stooped and kissed her niece tenderly on both cheeks, and then went to the window.

"I mustn't keep the horses out all night. Jean! Jean!"

The coachman turned on the box and looked up at the window.

"You can go to the stables. Monsieur Chabot will not return to the city to-night."

M. Roupell closed the window again and came back to where her niece was sitting.

"Monsieur Chabot sleeps here to-night?" inquired Harriet, in a tone of apparent unconcern, while her heart was really beating violently. "Where will you put him, aunt?"

"Can't he have Monsieur Van Lith's old room, dear?"

"Not very well. But the chamber of your own is ready, and the sheets are aired."

"Very well, child, then I will give directions that he be lodged there. And now good-night. Don't sit up reading; but try to sleep."

M. Roupell turned and left the apartment. It was the last benediction that was to fall from the lips of Harriet Weldon's benefactress; for the shadow of an awful crime was even then hovering over the chateau.

(To be continued.)

A Plague of Clocks.

We had been settled but a little while in our Indian clearing, and had just acquired a deed to it bearing the signature of Andrew Jackson, says "Joachim" H. Miller in the Boston Transcript, when one day a big, raw-boned, hatchet-faced man in a beaver hat came to us by way of the State road, with a load of clocks in a carriage. He had a big, impertinent boy with him, and pleaded sadly that both of them were sick.

Mother was very good to them, pulled out the trundle-bed to the middle of the floor, had us children sleep at the foot of her bed, and treated the strangers as if they had been her own blood. But they both wailed and moaned bitterly, and begged father to take the clocks and dispose of them at his leisure to his neighbors.

There was a whole carriage load of them, but upon the reiterated assurance that he could double, and even treble, his money, our confiding father, not knowing one thing about the real price or value of such wares, signed a note and became a "merchant."

At the end of the year that hatchet-faced man came back and exacted his money with enormous interest, although father had not yet sold a single clock.

Years later, when we set out to cross the great plains, those old clocks, with but a single one missing, took up more than half the wagon space. We hauled them, from Indiana almost to the top of the Rocky Mountains, and then, one night, in a terrific snowstorm, when the wagon had upset, we found a use for them. Brass, wood, glass and varnish all went to feed a fire. And so peace to their sounding brass, rest to their brazen faces!

Had Heard the Name.

The stage coach that carries the mail between Kent's hill and Readfield station in Maine drew up along the roadside and the driver accosted a little old man working in a field, says Everybody's Magazine.

"Do you know who Mrs. Abby B. Brown is and where she lives?"

The old man considered. "Brown, Abby B. Brown?" he repeated. "You don't mean Mrs. Polly Brown, do you?"

"No, Mrs. Abby B. Brown; we've got a letter for her."

"B. you say the middle letter is B. do you? I know a whole lot of Browns that live on the other side of the road, but there ain't any Abby B. among them. You don't mean Abby B. Smith, do you? She lives over—"

"No, it's Abby B. Brown. We'll find her somehow. Thanks."

The stage driver started his horses, but before the corner was reached a faint "Hello" caused the passengers to turn around. The old man, now in hand, was pursuing the stage.

"Brown, Mrs. Abby B. Brown, did you say? Why, I know her. She's my wife."

He Was in Luck.

"My heart and hand are priceless," said the sentimental maid.

"I'm glad of that," replied the practical young man. "Otherwise I might not be able to raise the price."

Working the Charm.

The Widow—Thirty-five is the most charming age in woman.

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GOES UP IN SMOKE

Elevators, Mills and Docks Burn at Superior, Minn.

GREAT DESTRUCTION OF GRAIN

Flames Originate in Great Northern Storage Plant, Containing 600,000 Bushels of Grain.

Duluth, Minn., Nov. 9.—Fire of an unknown origin last night destroyed the Great Northern elevator "A" in Superior, together with 600,000 bushels of grain, principally wheat, all of which was fully covered by insurance. The elevator was owned by the Great Northern railroad but was leased to the A. D. Thomson company of Duluth.

The sparks soon ignited the Grand Republic mill on Tower Bay slip, the Great Lakes Dredge & Dock company's dock and the Duluth Superior Storage company, which contained the finishing plant of the Webster Chair company.

The fire started at the southwest corner of the elevator dock, and before it was noticed had communicated to the elevator. An alarm was turned in and four fire tugs responded, but owing to the intense heat they were driven out of the slip and devoted all their energies to saving the adjoining property.

The steamers W. A. Parent and W. A. Rogers were in the elevator slip loading wheat and the latter was to take out 200,000 bushels of wheat.

The fire was under control by 1 o'clock and the damage is placed at \$2,500,000.

ARREST BANKERS.

Conditions of Title Guarantee & Trust Co. to Be Investigated.

Portland, Nov. 9.—Developments yesterday in the affairs of the Title Guarantee & Trust company were as follows:

District Attorney Manning says he will cause the arrest of officers of the bank today on complaint of C. F. Ehnman, who deposited \$1,330 the day before the bank closed. Ehnman agrees to swear to complaint charging the bank officers with having accepted deposits when they knew the bank to be insolvent, contrary to law.

State Treasurer Steel's violation of law in depositing \$300,000 school funds without security is considered by District Attorney Manning, of Multnomah, and District Attorney McNary, of Marion, as basis for criminal prosecution.

Opinion that Steel should resign is held in numerous quarters and is shared by Governor Chamberlain, but Steel says he will not resign. Resignation would enable the state to sue bondsmen for indemnity.

Governor Chamberlain will continue holidays indefinitely, and probably will issue one proclamation for all of next week.

SEND CASH WEST.

Secretary Cortelyou Swings Club Over Eastern Bankers.

Washington, Nov. 9.—The West is to receive all the assistance at the command of the Treasury department to meet the great demand for money to move the crops. Secretary Cortelyou discussed the situation with the president yesterday, and has formulated a plan, which will be carried into effect, unless the Eastern banks rise to the occasion and show less selfishness. Mr. Cortelyou is of the opinion that the large importations of gold and the housecleaning which has been done in New York have placed the banks there in a materially improved condition. The government no longer feels the necessity of aiding the Eastern situation, but is impressed with the importance of meeting the situation which exists in the West, where there is pressure for cash for crop-moving purposes.

New Lemon Trouble.

San Francisco, Nov. 9.—A new lemon infection, termed "brown rot," has been discovered by the University of California agricultural experts, which, if not checked immediately, will injure lemon growers in the Southern part of the state thousands of dollars. For many years it has been thought that the peculiar disease was "blue mold," another common fungus growth which infects lemons. It has been discovered that brown rot is contagious and spreads like wildfire, while blue mold is non-contagious and does not spread.

Union Pacific Drops Mining.

Chicago, Nov. 9.—It is announced here that the Union Pacific has arranged to retire from the commercial coal business on January next. As a preliminary order, have been issued for the construction of a branch line 20 miles in length from Rock Springs to an extensive coal field in the north owned almost exclusively by independent operators. Heretofore the policy of the road has been not to run branch lines to independent fields.

Only Seventy Survive.

St. Petersburg, Nov. 9.—A dispatch received today from Samark and by the official telegraph agencies says that a special representative of a local newspaper who was sent to Karatagh in the Hisar district of Bokhara, which was destroyed by a landslide following the earthquake of October 21, reports that 3,400 persons perished and only 70 escaped.

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No. 3—
Leaves Albany for Corvallis..... 7:30 A. M.
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No. 4—
Leaves Albany..... 1:00 P. M.
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No. 5—
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No. 6—
Leaves Albany..... 1:15 P. M.
Arrives Albany..... 4:05 P. M.

Trains for Albany.

No. 7—
Leaves Corvallis..... 6:30 A. M.
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No. 8—
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Arrives Albany..... 1:45 P. M.

No. 9—
Leaves Corvallis..... 6:00 P. M.
Arrives Albany..... 6:40 P. M.

No. 10—
Leaves Corvallis..... 11:15 A. M.
Arrives Albany..... 12:58 P. M.

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