

# The Roupell Mystery

By Austyn Granville

## CHAPTER II.

An hour had elapsed since Mme. Roupell's departure. Harriet Weldon arose softly, and opening the window with great caution lest it should squeak upon its iron hinges, looked out again upon the front of the house. Everything was enveloped in a flood of moonlight. The fine grasses upon the lawn glittered like spears of ice with the heavily falling dew drops. The call of a night bird to its mate was the only sound that broke the stillness. The beauty of the night touched her deeply, and the song of the nightingale more profoundly yet. She leaned her head against the window frame and her slight form shook with suppressed sobs. The thought came that every minute's delay would make it more difficult for her lover to escape from the house. In a few hours the village would be stirring. He would be seen by some peasant going early afield, as he left the grounds. She must at once summon him from his hiding place. In a few minutes he could be gone, and she would breathe freely again.

Advancing on tiptoe to the door of the chamber, she turned the handle softly and stepped out into the passage. The house was perfectly quiet. In the semi-darkness she crept timidly up the corridor, feeling her way with the tips of her fingers against the old oaken wainscoting. At last her foot struck against a door mat. She tried to recollect what door mat it was. She stooped and passed her hand over it. It was an old-fashioned rag mat of American make, such as one sees in the houses of middle class farmers in New England. It had been her lover's request to have such a thing at the door of his room. It reminded him of his old home across the seas. It was all right. This was the apartment she wanted. She placed her fingers upon the handle of the door, opened it a little way, and called softly.

"To her surprise there was no answer. She opened the door wider yet, and went in. The moonlight, shining in through the window streamed over the carpet and made every portion of the chamber plainly visible. She glanced quickly around. To her intense astonishment the room was empty. Trembling with fear and excitement she again issued forth, and stood once more in the corridor. At the very moment that she did so, a pistol shot resounded loudly through the chateau. And then from all parts of the house its inmates rushed hurriedly.

It was a terror-stricken assemblage of men and women, aroused in the dead of the night by that sharp, ominous appalling sound. In the supreme quiet of the chateau the pistol shot had rung out with terrible distinctness. Though terrified beyond measure in the almost certain knowledge that some dreadful tragedy had taken place, Harriet Weldon did not hesitate a moment. Dashing along the corridor she flung aside the heavy draperies which separated Mme. Roupell's sleeping apartment from her sitting room, and bravely entered.

Face to face, M. Chabot and her lover were standing. On the floor between them, lying at full length, her face turned upward, gashed in the dim light of the solitary candle, lay Mme. Roupell. From a bullet wound in her forehead, a little blood was slowly oozing on to the floor and matting with its crimson flood the gray, waving and carefully combed hair. The room seemed suddenly to fill with people, all looking through a kind of mist. A ghastly, unwholesome pallor was on each face. The ordinary proprieties of life were set at naught. The conventionalities of dress were forgotten. Emily was bending over the prostrate woman, her fine features pale as death, but set as in marble, and showing no trace of tears or womanly weakness. She seemed the only collected one in the room; all the rest stood gasping and staring, a helpless, bewildered, frightened group. Emily evinced no surprise at seeing Van Lith there so unexpectedly, as everyone else did. With much presence of mind, she at once turned her attention to the sufferer, to see what could be done for her. She gave orders clearly and rapidly, and with a marvelous self-command.

"Lift her up and place her on the bed. Keep her head raised. This pillow so. Bring me water, quickly."

She bathed the cold, inanimate face; she folded her handkerchief up into a wad and placed it over the fatal spot. She bound over it as tightly as possible a long bandage torn from the white coverlet. Then she turned to Jean, the coachman, who, hearing the disturbance from the adjoining stables, had rushed into the house accompanied by the gardener.

"Take the fastest horse you have and ride to the village. Send Dr. Croiset up here; and then keep right straight on into Paris. Here, take this with you."

She turned to the writing table and hastily penned the following note:

"Please come to us immediately, and bring with you the best surgeon you can find. Aunt Ruth has been shot—I fear fatally. Come at once, I beg of you, or you may be too late."

"EMILY WELDON."

She folded the note and addressed it to "Dr. Paul Mason," "Rue de Revery, No. 24."

"How long will it take you to deliver that?" she asked, as she handed it to the coachman.

"It is fourteen miles," replied the man. "I can do it in an hour and a half."

"I can cover the distance in half the time," exclaimed Van Lith, eagerly stepping forward. He had been standing quietly by Harriet, endeavoring to comfort her. "Give me the note, I will go at once."

Emily was about to hand it to him, when the voice of M. Chabot was heard raised in marked remonstrance. He spoke slowly, deliberately, and as Charles Van Lith listened, he felt that each word was an iron link in that chain which was soon to bind him hand and foot, and hold him up to the world as a murderer.

"Monsieur Van Lith must not leave this house until the shooting of Madame Roupell has been investigated by the proper authorities."

The suddenness of this accusation, the

error of it, the facts which, with its entrance, instantaneously arose in the mind of Van Lith and arrayed themselves remorselessly against him, deprived him for the moment of the power of reply. In the dead silence that ensued M. Chabot turned and dispatched the coachman on his errand, adding in an imperative tone:

"After you have called up the doctor, stop at Monsieur Revelli's, the mayor, explain briefly what has happened, then go to Monsieur Delorme, the justice of the peace. Tell him, too. Remember, Madame's life may depend on the quickness of your movements."

M. Chabot, whom one would never have suspected of being cast in an heroic mold, was undoubtedly the coolest person in the room.

Van Lith, fully conscious of the awful peril in which he stood, again essayed to speak. M. Chabot interrupted him. He did it politely; but there was no mistaking his firmness. The servants thought it admirable—and his knowledge of law, ah! was it not prodigious?

"Monsieur Van Lith, you may be a perfectly innocent man. If so, it will be easy enough for you to explain everything presently to the mayor, whom I have sent for. In the meantime, the fact of your appearance here at such an hour as this, under circumstances which lay you open to grave suspicion, make it my duty, as a citizen, to forbid your departure."

"Monsieur Chabot!" ejaculated Harriet. "What do you mean? You surely don't believe that Charles—that Monsieur Van Lith has done this horrible thing?"

The Frenchman shrugged his high shoulders—just a little, and showed his white teeth as he smiled—just a little, in a deprecating manner.

"Monsieur Van Lith, I am simply doing my duty."

"O, this must not be," exclaimed the girl, now almost unmoved with apprehension. "I can explain all—I can clear him—"

But her wrist was seized in Van Lith's grasp.

"Monsieur Van Lith," began Harriet, pricking up his little ears like a fox terrier.

"Monsieur Van Lith will explain nothing," returned Van Lith, meaningly regarding the Parisian.

"Then perhaps monsieur can?"

"When the proper time comes, yes. To you, you sneaking cur, not one syllable."

The Frenchman's face took on a ghastly color. He stammered out a few unintelligible words, as one who in the heat of a terrible passion pauses to find the most stinging epithet. But an exclamation from Emily Weldon checked both men instantly. She had been bending over the prostrate form of the injured woman.

Now she looked up, the calm of a great despair in her face, the first tears she had shed glistening in her fine eyes.

"O, Harriet," she cried, "she is dead. I shall never hear her voice again."

The girl's grief was something terrible to witness. Harriet stole softly to her sister's side, and putting her arms about her, strove to comfort her.

"Let us leave here," said Van Lith to M. Chabot, who stood aghast and humbled in the presence of such affliction.

And side by side the two men, the Frenchman and the American, the accuser and the accused, went out from the chamber, leaving the living and despairing alone with their sacred dead.

## CHAPTER III.

Victor Lablanche, the Parisian prefect of police, was a man who united within himself qualities not often found combined in the same individual, for while he was a sagacious and even brilliant theorist, he possessed at the same time a thorough practical knowledge of his business.

In the course of his long career on the police he had risen, by ability alone, from a comparatively obscure to his present prominent position. When called upon to unravel a mysterious crime, he generally adopted a certain theory, and pursued it with the persistency of a bloodhound. It was the arrival of this officer that a little group of people inside, and a promiscuous crowd of about two hundred of the inhabitants of Villeneuve who were assembled outside the chateau impatiently awaited.

A sudden hush fell upon the gathering on the lawn as, about an hour after day-break, a dark-colored, unpretentious road cart turned into the avenue. M. Victor Lablanche had at once responded in reply to the call made upon him. The reeking flanks and foam-covered sides of the animal in the shafts sufficiently attested the speed at which the distance between the village and the metropolis had been traversed.

M. Chabot, cool and collected as ever, was the first to receive the prefect. He conducted him into the reception room. The mayor and M. Delorme, the justice of the peace, were sipping their coffee in the dining room. Fearful that he might in some way compromise her, Van Lith had signed to Harriet not to come near him, and she now sat, in silent, tearful grief, with her arm about Emily's waist, in the window seat of the library.

Five minutes after the arrival of the coachman at his lodgings in the Rue de Revery, Dr. Paul Mason was on the road to the chateau. He had gazed for a moment on the face of his old friend.

"She must have died instantly," he remarked, as he turned sadly away.

M. Victor Lablanche was not at liberty to ask any question he chose. He did not care to ask any questions at present. He would go into the room where the mayor was, and hear what he had to say.

"Have you examined the prisoner?" was the first question he propounded to that functionary.

"I have attempted to; but he refuses to make any statement, saying he prefers to wait until he is brought before the court."

"He has the right to waive the preliminary examination before the justice, of course, but he is hardly wise in this instance. A plain explanation of how he came to be in the chateau at that time of night might go far toward acquitting him—that is," he added, "if it is capable of explanation."

M. Victor Lablanche allowed the worthy magistrates to ramble on. When the gentleman had quite finished, he said:

"You had better tell the prisoner and the principal witnesses to get ready to take the early train for Paris. The presence of your local physician will be necessary also, so that he can testify to the nature of the wound by which Madame Roupell met her death. In the meantime I will make an examination of the scene of the murder."

"That will be unnecessary. I have already made one."

"With what result, monsieur le maire?"

"The finding of this pistol, with which, doubtless, the murder was committed."

"Let me look at it."

The prefect took the weapon, and examined it carefully.

"It is of American manufacture," he said. "Did you find anything else?"

"Nothing except some private papers of Madame Roupell's scattered on the floor of her chamber."

"Where is the young man who has been accused of this crime?"

"He is under a strong guard at present, in the butler's pantry. Do you wish to see him?"

"No, I think not," he said. "The judge sits at ten o'clock, and he will hear what he has to say. Meantime, though, as I said, I wish to make an inspection of the premises."

The mayor at once bestirred himself, and conducted M. Lablanche upstairs to the room where the body of Madame Roupell was still lying. Nothing had been moved. Even the blood which had soaked into the hearth rug had not been wiped up, an overturned chair lay where it had fallen, some papers were scattered about the room.

"Do not disturb them," said M. Lablanche, pointing to the papers. "While they simply indicate how Madame Roupell was engaged at the time of the shooting, and perhaps have no bearing on the question of who committed this crime, still it is our rule to move nothing."

"And as to who did commit it, I think there can be no doubt," remarked the mayor.

"There is always room for doubt in any case," replied the prefect. "Of course this young man denies his guilt, though silent on other points."

"Most decidedly he does."

"Then you have got to prove it in order to bring the crime home to him. You must recollect that under the revised penal code of France, the prisoner has no longer to prove his innocence of a charge. It is the duty of the law to bring it home to him."

"But Monsieur Chabot assures me," said the mayor, "that he found this young man in Madame Roupell's chamber immediately after the report of the pistol."

"Oh perhaps the young man found him. What do you think of that?" remarked the prefect. "You see, my dear sir, we must not be too hasty."

"I must confess that you put the matter in a new light; but Monsieur Van Lith's appearance in the chateau?"

"How does he account for that?"

"He refuses to account for that at all, as I said," replied the mayor.

"Was he in the habit of calling at this house?"

"At one time, but lately had been not only uninvited, but requested to discontinue his visits. His presence in the chateau was, in fact, totally unexpected by anyone until he was discovered in Madame Roupell's chamber."

M. Lablanche now threw a searching glance around the chamber. It would indeed, as if nothing could escape his acute observation. On the large, handsome bedstead, lay the body of the late proprietress of the Chateau Villeneuve. This piece of furniture was nearly in the center of the room, with the head placed against the wall. To the east two windows looked out upon the grounds in the rear of the building. An aviary, containing several canaries, which had been great favorites of the dead woman, stood between the windows. Its occupants were singing merrily, apparently unmindful that the hand which had fed and tended them was powerless to do so more. In the windows, stands of gramophone and other plants were tastefully arranged, and the heavy curtains had been carefully drawn back to permit the free ingress of the sunlight. On the toilette table lay the gloves which Mme. Roupell had worn at the opera the preceding evening. There, also, was the fan which she had carried. On one of the chairs was the shawl which Emily Weldon had wrapped about her.

(To be continued.)

## Unavoidable.

In the early years of his ministry Bishop Bascomb, of the Southern Methodist Church, was severely handicapped, says the author of "Women of the Confederacy," by the fact that he was handsome and graceful. He was considered "too much of a dandy," and for a long time was sent on mountain circuits to bring him down to the level of old-fashioned Methodism.

As a last resort, when he continued to appear "dandified," one of his mountain members persuaded the minister to wear a suit of homespun, that he might be more in harmony with his listeners. The next morning he went early to service to see the success of his scheme.

When Mr. Bascomb appeared, as trig in homespun as he had been in broadcloth, the mountaineer's chagrin was intense.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed, "Go it your own way, Brother Bascomb. I give it up. It ain't your clothes that's so pretty; it's just you."

## The Call.

"You know," said Mrs. Subbuts, "that Mrs. Newcome moved in across the way last Monday, so I enticed today."

"Well, well!" remarked her husband, "how like poker this 'social game' is."

"You do you mean?"

"Why, in poker you also call when you want to see what the other person's got."—Philadelphia Press.

The building located at the greatest height in Europe is the climber's hut on the Matterhorn, nearly 12,900 feet above the sea.

## MERITS OF THE COMBINE.

Comparison Made With Old Method of Harvesting.

A Spokane man wrote to the Washington State Experiment station staff, Pullman, recently, inquiring relative to the growing and cutting of wheat, the and flour-making content of the berry as affected by soil, climate and methods of cutting. Professor R. W. Thatcher, director of the station, answered the inquiries as follows:

1. Does the wheat lose any of the essential elements for good flour by standing until ripe enough to cut and thresh at one operation.

"Wheat does not lose any of its constituents by standing until it is thoroughly ripe. It does, however, manufacture and store up a somewhat larger proportion of starch than if cut when in the dough, resulting in a slightly softer wheat with a larger proportion of starch and a smaller proportion of gluten. The difference in this respect is rather small, however."

2. Are the berries as plump when cut by a combined machine as when the grain is harvested by a binder or header, and threshed after standing in the shocks, or having been stacked?

We are informed that the wheat buyers and millers make a difference between grain harvested with the combined machine and that cut with the binder or header.

The berries are plumper than when cut by the binder and left standing in the shocks, for the same reason; that is, a greater production of starch fills the berries plumper."

3. Do the berries lost their color when left growing until ripe enough to cut with a combined machine?

"The color of the berry is not changed materially until after the grain is dead ripe, after which it may be bleached out to a varying extent, depending upon the length of time and the climatic conditions."

4. Is all the wheat in one sack of an even grade when harvested with the combined machine?

"The wheat in a single sack of grain harvested by a combined machine is not necessarily of an even grade. Since the machine is run up or down hill, it may cut and run into the sack wheat growing under quite different conditions. This, however, is equally true of any other method of harvesting. It is well known that grain from the top of a clay point is different from that of a north hill slope, and both of these are different from that of a south hill slope, or upon a flat. I do not think any method of harvesting will secure absolutely the uniformity you suggest."

5. Is there more wheat lost during the operation of the combined machine than through harvesting and threshing by the old method? If so, how much?

"We have no information which would make it possible for us to state definitely whether there is more or less wheat lost during the operation of a combined machine, than by harvesting and threshing by the old method. We are aware of the objection that has been raised in California to the use of a combined machine, but do not think it is a 'great' objection, as has been stated."

"There is no question but that the grain cut with a combined machine is slightly lower in proportion of gluten than that which will show. The yield per acre is certainly a little later, if the grain is allowed to become ripe. I am personally of the opinion that the most serious objection to the combined machine is in the distribution over the field of the threshed out weed seeds."

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The water can be backed up for several miles without doing any damage and power enough can be derived to give light and power to the town of Elma for years to come. The company has a franchise from the town of Elma for furnishing light to the town. Its present plant has been in operation for three years.

The power has been obtained from stream, but the cost of wood and coal has become so high that the company decided to install a water power plant. The saving in fuel and operating expenses will be about \$200 a month.

CHILI SAUCE.

Peel and chop together two dozen tomatoes and six small onions with two seeded red peppers. Stir in four tablespoonsful of salt, a cup of granulated sugar, three teaspoonfuls each of ground cloves, cinnamon and allspice and a teaspoonful of ground ginger. Put into a kettle with two quarts of vinegar and boil for three hours. Set aside until cool before bottling.

Test for Eggs.

To know if an egg is fresh, place it in a basin of cold water. If it remains at the bottom, it is all right; if it floats at all, it is of rather doubtful freshness; if it floats gaily on the surface, you may be certain it is quite bad.

Metal Tongs Kept Sober.

Metal tongs, if dissolved for some time, give a musty flavor to the tea when next used. This may be prevented by placing a lump of sugar in the teapot before putting away.

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