

Diamond Cut Diamond  
OR,  
THE ROUT OF THE ENEMY.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Continued.

Sometimes, as she came along the lane that wound beneath the woods in which the old house lay, she would look up a little doubtfully at the broken-down gateway, which was all that could be seen of it from the road, and she would catch herself wondering why that beautiful and mysterious woman and her old father had so suddenly vanished, leaving no trace of their existence. Was it because of what she had said to her about Geoffrey? And it is quite certain that Miss Dane would not have taken any blame to herself had she been assured that it was so. Madame de Brefour was a bad woman undoubtedly, she said to herself with decision. Women who are mysterious and can't give an open account of their past lives, and have not got respectable relations to prop up their position and vouch for their antecedents, always are bad. Besides, she was a Papist, and a designing person, and no doubt Coddisham was very well rid of her. Yet, where and who was she? she wondered. And why had Geoffrey never been home for so long?—never once since she had so suddenly disappeared, she and all her belongings, from the house which he used to visit with such incoercible frequency.

Was Geoffrey running after her still—was she laying her spells upon him, striving to ruin his body and soul, in some other place where his sister's wholesome and restraining influence was not present to drag him back from this iniquitous intercourse? And then, indeed, as so awful a possibility presented itself to her mind, Miss Dane did occasionally experience a qualm of compunction.

"Perhaps it was an error of judgment to have driven her away," she owned to herself once or twice when haunted by these terrible suggestions. "Perhaps I had better have kept her here under my own eye, so as to admonish them both; and yet I acted for the best and from the highest motives. It was a scandal in the parish, and as my too easy-going father would not interfere, it fell upon my shoulders to remove a public evil for the sake of the example, even at the risk of my brother falling into deeper disrepute elsewhere. For his sake I might, perhaps, have acted more wisely, but for the sake of what is right, surely I could not have acted otherwise, and my conscience reproaches me with nothing."

Thus Florence consoled herself, and fortified by pious self-approbation honestly believed herself to be blameless in the matter.

Perhaps from the strict moralist's point of view, she may theoretically have had right and justice on her side, but how much practical mischief do not these uncompromising Christian persons, with their unalterable code of laws, do to their weaker brethren in this hard tempest-tossed world!

Well, the summer was well nigh over, and the first of the autumn months nigh at hand, when something which may be called an event in Florence Dane's monotonous existence came to pass. This was nothing more wonderful than an invitation from some friends near London to pay them a visit. The Vicar of St. Steven's District Church, Riverside, had, two years ago, married a wife, and this wife had at one time been a friend of Florence Dane. Mrs. Greathhead wrote one day, heaven knows upon what sudden impulse of friendliness and hospitality, and asked Florence to come and stay with her.

"Come now," she wrote, "at once, dear Florence, before the summer is quite over. I am longing to show you my new husband, my new home, and my new baby. The garden is still full of flowers, and we have a capital tennis ground. The river, too, is but two minutes' walk from the house, and I am sure you will enjoy the boating. We have a boat of our own, and Cyprian will have time to row us out every evening after service, so do not delay your visit until the days get short and chilly."

This letter Florence Dane flung across the breakfast table towards her father's plate, with a little snort of derision.

"Very kind of Carry Greathhead, but quite impossible."

Mr. Dane read the letter, and looked up mildly over his spectacles.

"Why is it impossible, my love? I think you had most certainly better accept the invitation."

"My dear father, how can I leave home just now?"

"I see no difficulty, Florence; all the school treats are over, there is nothing of any importance in the parish to keep you, nothing that your sisters and Miss Jones cannot do for you. It will make a pleasant change for you." Florence shook her head.

"I can't see much pleasure in it. A good tennis ground, she says, and you know I never play tennis! A baby too, as if I wasn't worn out with looking after babies, at home! The river! I am always nervous in boats, people will fidget up and down in them, and I don't know how to swim; and besides, really, my dear father, I do not see how you could possibly get on without me."

Mr. Dane was sorting his own letters and circulars, and he smiled a little quiet smile all to himself—while he looked down at them. A gay, although altogether a guilty, sensation of hope suddenly awoke within him. How utterly delightful it would be to be for once quite, quite free. To have nobody to egg him on, and set him going, nobody to drag iniquities out of dark corners and lay them out before him in the broad glare of day, so that he was forced to take notice of them; nobody to come bustling into his study just when he was doing off comfortably over his book and his pipe, to make

startling revelations concerning detected sinners, or to warn him against something he had much rather have remained in ignorance about, or to open his eyes to that which he infinitely preferred to wink at! Oh! what a holiday he would have of it! He felt like a schoolboy! And then he pulled himself up with shame at this unholy glee. For how good and hard working was Florence, how indefatigably she toiled, how sincerely she gave up her life to all these labors, that if not entirely of love were yet wholly of usefulness and goodness! What, indeed, would become of him, what would become of Coddisham without her!

And so, because he was ashamed of the unworthy feeling, he dissembled, as men are wise to dissemble towards the domestic tyrant whom they value for fear, and whilst owing to the loss she would be to him, pressed her gently withal, as if from purely disinterested motives, to accept the invitation from her friend.

It was so long since she left home, he urged. Change was good for everybody. A little rest after all her hard work would be certainly beneficial. She would come back all the fresher. It was certainly his wish, unselfishly speaking, that she should go.

Perhaps she only needed to be pressed. Perhaps she was secretly longing, like any other weak and mortal young woman, to see fresh faces and fresh scenes. Be that as it may, in the end Florence Dane consented, and an answer was duly written and posted to Mrs. Greathhead, naming an early day for her departure from home.

Thus it came to pass that early in the ensuing week Miss Dane found herself, somewhat to her own surprise, located in Mr. Greathhead's pretty new vicarage house in the suburban town of Riverside, with a dainty bedroom and sitting-room set apart for her own use, with no younger sisters to look after, and nobody to admonish or exhort, and nothing on earth to do from morning till night, but to be amused and talk pleasantly to her friend and her husband and their acquaintances. It was a novel sensation to her, and not an unbeneficial one, inasmuch as it made her feel herself to be a smaller and more insignificant individual in the world than she had ever supposed before, for Coddisham apparently got on very well without her, and nothing as yet proved to her that she had been summoned to Riverside by an Almighty Providence for the furthering of some great scheme for the benefit of her fellow-creatures.

Nothing needed reforming or remodeling here. Mr. and Mrs. Greathhead were a domestic couple, much attached to one another. The baby was under the care of a clever nurse, who was in no doubt as to the correct management of infants in arms. The church services were frequent and well attended. There were schools, clubs, reading-rooms, all after the newest systems, and all in good working order. Florence, who was something of a fatalist, could not understand why fate had taken her to Riverside, where, apparently, there was no opening for her talents, and no opportunity of setting the people to rights, such as her soul delighted in.

"It is impossible," she said to herself, "that I can have been meant to leave my great sphere of usefulness and activity at home, and simply and solely to walk up and down the river with Carry's baby, to sit and do needlework in the drawing-room and to recline in the stern of the boat whilst her husband pulls up both as far as the lock and back."

For the Reverend Cyprian never went beyond the lock, and for the very best of reasons. He was quite sure he would never get back through it! And then all at once, whilst she yet doubted and repined, the truth was revealed to Florence Dane, and she knew why an All-seeing Providence had decreed that Mrs. Greathhead should invite her to Riverside; for one afternoon, as she was strolling leisurely down to the Thames—Mrs. Greathhead having asked her to go on her husband's boat, whilst she and her husband lingered to see to the wants of a parishioner—suddenly, at the corner of the road, just where the high brick wall, with its heavy ivy penthouse sloped away, so that the silver river came into view like a sheet of glass, reflecting its green banks line for line upon its bosom, she ran straight up against Madame de Brefour!

Florence gasped, Madame de Brefour smiled, and made a little inclination of her head, a little gesture of her hand, as though she would have reached it forth—whilst her lovely eyes opened themselves wide with astonishment, and her lips half framed a word of surprise at the unexpected meeting— for Rose was one of those who remembered a benefit very long, but forgot an injury very soon.

But by this time Miss Dane had, as she would say, recollected herself. Recollected what was due to the daughter of a clergyman, and the sister of an innocent young man inveigled into the paths of vice. She drew herself up and flung back her head, grasping her hands the while tightly together with a grand air which would have befitted a queen, but which sat somewhat poorly on four foot one, and a little dignity either of face or figure, and ignoring altogether the lovely smile and the proffered hand of peace, she passed on with her nose high in the air, and her eyes fixed immovably upon the waters of the Thames. But, from that moment, she knew—knew why Providence had sent her to Riverside, and what was the work that had been designed for her to accomplish there!

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erly g stared in his face, and as if he had never seen nor heard her he plunged into an open carriage. The guard slammed to the door, and the train began, to move on, and there in the shadow, as he was carried away, Florence could see the fixed white features, and miserable far-away eyes, still looking out blindly, vacantly into space—like the eyes of one who has said good-bye to his last hope on earth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How full of hope he had set forth that day! As he took his place in the train, more than a quarter of an hour too soon, it seemed to him that the time would never pass, that the short journey would never come to an end. All the way down he read and reread the little note by which she had summoned him, read it till he knew every line, every stroke of it, by heart, dwelling fondly upon every word and trying to draw hidden meanings out of every simple expression. This was the letter which the morning post had brought him:

"10, Longway Road, Riverside.

"My Dear Geoffrey,— I have not hitherto written to you or let you know my direction, because I did not think it well that you should visit me. But now I want to see you, and you must come to me at once—tomorrow, afternoon, if you will. You will find me at home and waiting for you. I have something to say to you.

"Always your friend,

"ROSE DE BREFOUR."

All his love, all his devotion to her, had sprung up afresh within his heart at the sight of her handwriting, and at the thought of seeing her again—life seemed another thing to-day. All his coldness and bitterness that her desertion of him had engendered within him melted away beneath the sunshine of her gracious summons to him. He would see her again, his queen, his love!

For a brief space, perhaps, he wavered in his allegiance, but when the test of temptation had come he had withstood it, and had cast away the good things of this world for her dear sake, and so now he was going to meet her with a clear heart, with a joy in which there would be no drawback, and with no cloud to mar the perfectness of his happiness. And this time he told himself, nothing should part them—nothing on earth. No false humility, no nor yet any fears of his displeasure, should hold him back from speaking of his love, from asking from her the best that she could give to him. He remembered that his uncle, her wither would be no drawback, and anger against him for his rebellion, had told him that Madame de Brefour had a husband living, but Geoffrey did not believe it. Had not she herself given him to understand that she was a widow, and why should he not take her word against the whole world?

He put away the awful suggestion from him with a passionate determination to disbelieve in it. It could not be true. Then what else in the face of his great love for her could be strong enough to divide him from her? Geoffrey went over the whole case in his mind, just as he had gone over it hundreds of times to himself—her different creed, her few years of seniority, her own admission of mysteries and complications in her life, with which she was anxious not to entangle him, and then he thought of his family, and the fate of his uncle—he weighed it all to the conclusion that, on the man's while to consider, when of such a one as Rose de Brefour in the balance.

"If she will have me," he said to himself, "I will brave all, give up all, for her sake, devote my whole life to her, die for her, if needs be."

And then the train started for Riverside, and in an incredible space of time Geoffrey had flung away to Longway Road, and was ringing the bell at No. 10.

It was like a glimpse of heaven to see Martine's face once more opened the door to him—her hands with impetuosity, then hard.

"Ah, Martine, how glad you are! How is Madame de Brefour? Take me to her at once!"

"Ah! Mon Dieu, Monsieur, said the old Frenchwoman, him, but though she sighed too. Well, too, you know how he has been of the beau monde, and what Madame is in the habit of telling you to do."

Everybody knew that the rabbit had been introduced into the island. This little evil in the great southern seas, among them until they had from England and turned loose to multiply in his new habitat. Unfortunately, he found his new surroundings most congenial and so he has spread all the habitable parts of Australia and New Zealand and has driven the people almost frantic, for nothing flourishes on a grander scale than the rabbit in his new home, and he has actually endangered the existence of other grass-eating animals. The greatest efforts have been put forth to exterminate him, but thus far without success. There is probably no other animal that supplies the markets of the world with so many skins in a year as the rabbits of Australia and New Zealand. About 6,000,000 squirrel skins of Siberia are sent to Europe annually, but in one year as many as 8,500,000 rabbit skins have been exported from Australasia, and still there seems to be no abatement of the nuisance.

This is an evil that sportsmen unwittingly inflicted upon the new country. It is well known that the Australasian countries are not rich in native fauna. After the British settlers began to arrive they gradually filled up the gaps in the local list of animal life by the importation of new wild and domestic species. Sportsmen introduced the deer, roebuck, hare and rabbit. The pig was brought into Australia and New Zealand, and a part of his numerous progeny, escaping before the days of fences and pens, has become wild, and THOUSANDS OF WILD PIGS are killed every year in the thickets. Many of the streams were stocked with salmon trout and other species of fish from the mother country. Bird life was particularly scarce, and at great cost starlings, sparrows, blackbirds, thrushes, crows, larks, and finches were introduced from England, quails from California, and the gray partridge and pheasant from China. They have all become acclimatized, have multiplied prodigiously, and in Australia to-day, a land of most peculiar and scanty native fauna, the visitor from Europe and America hears the same birds warbling in the woods and encounters the same domestic and wild animals as at home.

All of these varieties of animal life were a blessing to the country except the rabbit. The man who suggests a practical scheme for getting rid of this nuisance will make his fortune. A few years ago the Government of New South Wales offered a reward of \$125,000 for a feasible method of exterminating the pest.

The uses to which this mass of medicine is put are of course manifold. The majority are for so-called incurable diseases, while, of course, a great portion are panaceas. The advertising from the business is enormous, \$50,000 per week in England, and \$75,000 in America being a modest estimate. The profits are said to be monstrous, as the ingredients in the most cases cost little or nothing.

The introduction of machinery has in pillmaking, as in all other trades, greatly simplified and increased the business. Where formerly chemists and apprentices were engaged there are now machines to mix, coat, box and count the goods. The output in Great Britain, in consequence of the extreme ease in which both the medicine and the money may be made, has yearly increased until it is now estimated that 250 hundred weight, or about 40,000,000 pills, are consumed each week. In the United States the figures run over 50,000,000. This means that five humans out of six take a pill every seven days.

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A STRANGER PRESENT. Struggling Minister—There was a stranger in church to-day. Wife—What did he look like? I did not see him. Then how do you know there was a stranger among the congregation? I found a good quarter in the contribution box.

AN UNGALLANT REPLY. She—Did you know that I am an actress now? Why, no. All I heard was that you had gone on the stage.

NOT QUITE SURE. Do you think bachelors ought to be taxed? some one asked. I'm not quite sure yet, she answered dreamily. Give me another week and maybe I'll be able to land him without any outside help.

GLOVE GAMES. It is said that the Government of New South Wales offered a reward of \$125,000 for a feasible method of exterminating the pest.

tion in consequence of a direct cause or consequence, he annually swallows more pills. England is a close second, but then the second man, like a Vice President, has always sunk into the bottom of oblivion.

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