

A GREAT SECRET.

OR,
SHALL IT BE DONE.

CHAPTER XII.

As Peggy Beresford's little elfin face disappeared behind the hood of the carriage, Gerald instinctively reined in the fat old horse, which he had been at some pains to worry into abnormal speed. But Mr. Shaw, less susceptible, touched the lad's arm reprovingly.

"She had good reason for what she says, you may be sure. Drive fast. Perhaps her words were a message. At any rate I have no time to lose."

Gerald's face grew suddenly hot, and he whipped up the horse with great energy. This valiant attempt to cover an emotion which his companion had not even noticed was the more unnecessary as it was already dark—not with the darkness of a sunless day. There was no moon, but they could see the light-colored sandy road which lay for some distance straight before them, with flat bare fields on either side, and nothing but an occasional clump of leafless poplars or a tangle of dead bushes to break the monotonous stretch of uninteresting landscape between one group of cottages and the next. Gerald would have liked to talk, but the preoccupied manner of the elder man had to be respected, so he whistled softly to himself to while away the time until Mr. Shaw should think fit to break the silence. This the latter presently did upon the very subject which, in spite of the mysteries about his father and about the recent robbery that had filled his mind all day, was at the moment first in Gerald's thoughts.

"An odd little girl," Mr. Shaw said slowly.

"Odd! Who?" asked Gerald, knowing perfectly well who the odd little girl was.

"Miss Beresford. It isn't a woman, and it isn't a child, and it isn't a demon—at least, I don't think so; but it is a little of all three, and—I like it."

"Why do you say 'it'?" asked Gerald shyly, not liking to show that he was offended, though his whole heart was in arms.

"Because to say 'she' would be to do the queer little caricature of humanity great injustice."

"Caricature!" exclaimed Gerald indignantly. "Why, she's very pretty."

"Yes, in a way. But it is a wild weird sort of prettiness that made her, in my opinion, look ten times better when she dashed into the sedan all over mud, with her hair half down behind and falling into her eyes in front, then when she walked soberly in, all washed and combed like Miss Brown or Miss Robinson, and tried her hardest to be exactly like any one else."

"Well, I thought so too," Gerald admitted with hesitancy. "But I didn't expect you to say so, Mr. Shaw. I thought you liked girls who were called well-behaved, with their hair combed away in front, you know. And called into a little knob like a shell behind—like Miss Brown or Miss Robinson, at fact."

"So I do; in most respects the ordinary well-behaved girl is infinitely Miss Beresford's superior. But you can admire a wild rose as well as a garden rose, though the one has a commercial value and the other hasn't. And while I admit I should be sorry for the persons to whom this young lady stands in the relation of wife, housekeeper, or mother, and I doubt whether she will ever be even tamed down into an agreeable hostess, yet she is shrewd and amusing *en seculo ete*, and when left to herself she is picturesque. As she made that sensational entrance, though she looked half like a scarecrow, she looked half like a fancy picture of the north wind. I wonder what in the world that unlucky young Frenchman will do with her!"

"Unlucky!" stammered Gerald, amazed and incensed. "Why, he ought to be standing on his head with delight."

"If he indulged in such pranks as that he would be a better match for her, certainly," said Mr. Shaw, imperiously; "and their household would be lively. As it is, I can't help thinking they stand a poor chance of happiness, as far as one can see."

"If—if I thought that—" began Gerald, in a low husky voice.

But he did not say what he should do if he thought that; Mr. Shaw turned to look at him, but did not ask him to finish his sentence; and there was silence for some time, until they passed a man who was coming in the opposite direction. A lean and bent old man he was, dressed in the blue blouse of the working class; he was walking quickly, and did not glance up as the travellers passed. Gerald leaned out of the carriage to look after him; there was not light enough to see much, but the man's shuffling, halting gait was unmistakable.

"Why, it's old Monnier!" cried the young fellow. "He has been into Calais to-day, I suppose. Then Smith didn't find him at his cottage, so of course that's why he turned into the cabaret, as he's too fond of doing. I wish he had come with us; he's so jolly clever and so popular everywhere, that you would have travelled twice as comfortably if he had said a word or two to the guard and the station-master. He can nearly always manage a side of the carriage to himself, no matter how crowded the train is."

"That was not altogether an advantage last night," suggested Mr. Shaw, thoughtfully. "On the whole, I am glad Mr. Smith has not come."

"Don't you like him? Mr. Beresford thinks very highly of him."

"Yes, I could see that."

Something in Mr. Shaw's tone puzzled the young fellow, who looked curiously at him while he said, "Of course you didn't see enough of him to find out how clever he is; but I assure you in business he is Mr. Beresford's right hand."

"I should say he is more than that; he is Mr. Beresford's brain."

Gerald was too much amazed by this startlingly heterodox statement to have anything to say in refutation of it. He looked from his companion to the animal he was driving, and wondered by what strange chance such a shrewd man of business as Mr. Shaw had fallen to be struck by Mr. Beresford's hitherto unquestioned superiority to everybody else.

"You don't like Mr. Beresford; I can see that," he said, diffidently, after a silence.

"To be frank, I do not." The flood-gates were open at last, and the elder man turned

toward the younger with almost a sigh of relief. "It is not a gracious task to have to speak against the man whose guest one has been within the hour, to another man who is his guest still. But since half-truths are dangerous, and you are by your position deeply interested in the character of this man, I will tell you my opinion: it is, that Mr. Beresford, philosopher and philanthropist, is nothing but a selfish hypochondriac, with just sense enough to get himself well served, and to know that the less he says and does himself, and the more he leaves to his clever clerk, the better it will be both for his interests and his reputation. The clerk knows this as well as the employer, and profits by it, no doubt; he probably has a good deal of business on his hands of which his paralytic employer knows nothing; but, rogue as I believe him to be, I confess I prefer his audacious knavery to the cold-blooded cynicism of the other."

"What do you know about Smith? What have you found out?" asked Gerald deeply interested. "You must know something to speak like that."

"Well, yes, I do. I learned by chance while in Paris that this trustworthy Mr. Smith is making private bargains of his own with one of his employer's clients."

"Impossible! Who was it with?"

"With M. de Breteuil."

"M. Louis de Breteuil! One of our best clients. I must tell Mr. Be—"

"You will do nothing of the kind—yet. You only know enough to bring yourself into disgrace with both of them; for Mr. Beresford would believe nothing against his confidential clerk without strong proof. And all I can tell you at present is, that I myself, when I accompanied Blair on his second call at M. de Breteuil's hotel, heard the millionaire named me on the stairs, that a bargain made with an old paralytic didn't matter much, and would not interfere with their agreement. And they both seemed to enjoy the joke immensely."

"I wish you hadn't told me. It has made me feel so jolly uncomfortable," said Gerald, after a pause.

"And a good thing too. I don't want you to be comfortable here; I don't want you to stay here. You must come back to your old friends in England, and we'll soon put mysteries and knaveries and elfin girl out of your head—"

"No, Mr. Shaw," Gerald broke in, very decidedly. "It's awfully kind of you, and I know it seems beautifully ungrateful of me to say so. But I do mean to stay in this country for more than one reason. The first is, of course, that I must discover how and by whom my father was murdered. The second—"

The second reason was not so easily explained, for the young man stopped.

Mr. Shaw nodded disapprovingly. "Of course—the elfin girl!"

"It's not exactly that," said Gerald, apologetically. "At least, not—not in the way you mean. But, you see, the poor little thing has got no friends, and her father doesn't seem to care for her much, while—while she and I, we seem to get on very well together. It's like—like spoons, you know—not a bit like that, but more like chums, you know. She isn't stiff, like other girls, at least not with me—I mean," he corrected himself hastily, "she's only stiff before strangers, you know."

"And how long is it since you were a stranger to her?"

"Well, of course—two days isn't really a long acquaintance; but then when people meet first in a rather unromantic fashion, without having anybody to introduce them to each other, why, I think they seem to know each other quicker."

"I have no doubt they do."

"I don't see the use of such a lot of fuss about formal introduction myself. It seems to set up a barrier at once between you and the person you're introduced to; just as if the introducer said, 'I know I am doing a risky thing in introducing to you such a bad character as this; but there—I'll hold myself responsible for his decent behavior.' If Mr. Beresford had formally presented me to his daughter, as M. Fournier did to Louise, I should have looked upon her as I do upon the Dresden figures in the cabinet in the drawing-room, pretty, silly things, too fragile to play with, and whose value I don't understand. But when you first meet a girl curled up in a chair like a kitten, with her head hanging down over one side, and her little feet stuck up in front of her on a level with her shoulders, you—you—why, you feel she isn't china. And—and that's how I feel about Peg—Miss Beresford."

"Well, I think it's a great pity Peg—Miss Beresford, wasn't formally presented to you by her papa. It's a mistake in the long-run for a lad to see so few young women that he looks upon them as china; but when once he has got to look upon them in that light, it is better he should continue to do so, and, above all, that he should not want a Dresden figure for his own cabinet."

"But, Mr. Shaw, you're not a bachelor."

"No, my boy, but no right-minded martyr would wish to send others to the stake."

"And yesterday you said I came to England you would find me a nice wife."

"Yes, but not the promised wife of another man. Gerald, take care what you're doing; for, if you interfere with Mr. Beresford's plans, you will find—"

He stopped, and peered out from the hood of the carriage. Gerald's glance followed in the same direction, but he saw nothing except a bit of straggling hedge that bordered the roadside for a little way, up to the rough wall of a dilapidated and deserted cottage some hundred yards in front of them.

"What was it?" The circumstances of the drive, the subject of their thoughts, were just gloomy enough for both men to feel a suspicious interest in every animate object about them.

"I thought I saw something running on the other side of those brambles."

"A rabbit, I expect; the ground all round here is honeycombed with their holes."

"It was a rabbit four feet high, then."

"A donkey, perhaps."

"Very likely."

Neither of the men made any attempt to resume the interrupted conversation. Both kept their eyes upon a turn of the road still some yards off, where the ruined cottage on the left hand, and a copse of small trees and

bushes on the right, old in the prospect. Gerald gave the old horse a smart nod with the whip, and, at the instant the animal began to quicken his pace, his whistle was distinctly heard from the direction of the copse.

"Hullo!" said Ger, softly, glancing at his companion, whose a short nod to intimate that he heard nothing over the front of the carriage freedom of action in case of emergency for, without exchanging a word on the subject, both men had prepared, during the few minutes, for foul play of some kind. As the carriage was drawn rapidly in the shadow of the tangled branches, the driver man tightened his hold on the reins, glanced round at his friend, and their next—for the last time.

"There is something wrong, I am sure of it. Shall we turn back?"

"No. It is too late to do so—fast."

Again Gerald drew his whip sharply over the horse's now steaming flanks. There was something in front of them, some dark object crouching by the side of the road, on the right hand, near the side where the young man sat. To latter had scarcely caught sight of it when the low whistle was heard again, and Gerald knew that the crouching object was a man. With his eyes steadily fixed upon a spot, he turned the whip in his hand, and the butt-end ready for defence, when suddenly he felt the shock of a heavy weight flung with force on to the front of the carriage, and a roaring furnace breath against his face, while the gurgling sounds of a wild fall upon his ears, and Mr. Shaw's shout of "Help!"

He was only just time, as he turned, to see his friend dragged down to the ground by the jaws of a great animal, whose long, white fangs, and bright eyes shone in the darkness. He sprang up to help him, when he felt a horse, which had been checked by the attack and by the fall of Mr. Shaw, stop short; the two-wheeled carriage fell back with a jerk, and just as Gerald was thrown backward over the seat into the interior of the vehicle saw a man, whom even in the rapid glance he could see to be very tall and very slim, spring from the horse's back toward him. A moment later, as he advanced, the violence with which his legs, in falling, had struck against the back of the carriage, Gerald was trying to scramble up to the help of his friend, he felt a egg, cold hand upon his throat, and looking up he saw quite plainly, even in the darkness, the face of his assailant. Only for a moment; as, with struggling breath and starting eyes he lay helpless, with a hand to his throat and a knee upon his chest, meeting, with horrible, involuntary steadiness, the steady gaze of the man whom he believed to be his murderer, noting on the instant every feature, freezing under the frigidity of the pitiless eyes, he felt himself suddenly blinded, then gagged, and lastly bound still with the cries of his old friend ringing in his ears, still making frantic efforts to get free.

He knew that he had no hope of escape; knew that the long cold hands were quick and skilful, and that the infinite torture he was suffering as he lay blindfold, expecting every moment to feel the muzzle of a revolver against his temples, was the work of very few minutes; but the sense of his own danger was deadened by a strong conviction that he was only a secondary victim, that however he might fare with him, it would fare worse with Mr. Shaw. As well as he could, he tried to get his hands free, but he found that the handcuffs which were fastened to his wrists, were as heavy as lead.

But Gerald's head sank wearily, and his eyes grew dull and gentle again. "Who?" he repeated, trying to rouse himself; "why—why, it was my father! No one will believe it, I know; but they did murder him. Can't you let me sleep now? I will tell you the whole story in the morning."

Victor laid him down, and turned to his frightened mother.

"Poor fellow! His head is not quite clear yet," he whispered.

He was retreating from the room, when his mother rushed toward him and seized his arm.

"Where are you going, Victor? What are you going to do?"

"I am going to ride to 'Les Bouleaux' to inquire into this."

"No no, you must not go to-night—while there are robbers, murderers about," said she excitedly, clinging to him.

He disengaged himself by a deft movement, and addressed her from the passage with a more dramatically valiant air than an Englishman would have thought necessary, but with earnestness and fire.

"What one man can dare another can, mother. I will not rest until I have done what I can to discover who committed this crime!"

Before she could utter one word more, he had shut the door and hurried down the stairs.

"Some one inside!" cried one man, as he peered under the partly shattered cover. "He is hurt! He is still!" "He is dead!" cried different voices, as men and boys swarmed, pushing and peeping, about the overturned carriage.

Then a voice rose in authoritative tones above the rest: "Stand back, keep off the passers. If the man is breathing still, he will not breathe much longer if you crowd over him like herrings and keep off the air." And two or three strong-armed workmen forced back the foremost of the growing crowd, while the man who had first spoken, aided by another in a blouse, opened the door of the carriage and gently drew out Gerald's prostrate and senseless body. At the first sight of the hankerchief with which he was gagged, now wet and blood-stained, and of the cords which bound his arms, murmurs and exclamations broke from the nearest lookers; their cries were taken up by those behind, till the road was in an uproar; men, women, and children struggling, screaming, and running, some to get the best possible view of the backs of those persons who had been lucky enough or muscular enough to get close to the wrecked carriage, some to meet the police, who were hurrying to the spot.

"There has been a crime!" "It is a murder!" were the whispers, the cries that ran like wildfire from mouth to mouth, while those about the senseless man cut the cords which bound him, and did their best to revive the not yet extinct life within him. By this time he had been recognized, and his name was repeated with redoubled sympathy for him, with redoubled horror at the crime of which he had been the victim. For Gerald Staunton, and the gig, and the fat horse were well known in Calais and St. Pierre; and though he had few personal acquaintances in the factory, his good-humored face and his evident disgust at the turn-out he drove had made him a familiar and popular feature of the neighborhood.

At the first sign he gave of returning consciousness, he was, on the suggestion of one of the workmen from the factory who happened to be among the throng, carried on an impromptu stretcher straight into the town of Calais, and to the house of M. Fournier, where the strange story caused the utmost consternation among the family, who were at dinner when the unconscious guest arrived.

He was taken up to Victor's own room, where motherly Madame Fournier tended him herself, while Louise, after being refused permission to see him, went into hysterics in the dining-room. When the young man opened his eyes he at first remembered nothing, but stared silently at the green curtains of the bed on which he had been placed, and smiled at the kind face of the lady bending over him. It was not until he caught sight of Victor, who was standing behind his mother looking very grave and anxious that Gerald's face clouded with dull pain and perplexity. The young Frenchman could not restrain his eager solicitude: at this first gleam of intelligence in his friend's eyes he leaned over the bedside, and asked impetuously:

"Gerald, who was it attacked you?"

The young fellow suddenly sprang up on the bed, with fire in his eyes. "He has—been murdered!" he cried hoarsely.

Madame Fournier fell back in bewilderment and horror; Victor pressed past her, and supported the young fellow in his arms.

"Who—who has been murdered, Gerald?" he asked, in tones almost as hoarse as those of the injured man.

But Gerald's head sank wearily, and his eyes grew dull and gentle again. "Who?" he repeated, trying to rouse himself; "why—why, it was my father! No one will believe it, I know; but they did murder him. Can't you let me sleep now? I will tell you the whole story in the morning."

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Dictionary of Modern Times.

Bank.—Anciently an establishment for the safe custody of money; but now used for the unadvised disposal of the same.

Manager.—He who manages to do so dispose of it without the knowledge of the owners thereof.

Cashier.—So called (on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo*); just as a locket is so called because it does not lock, because he cannot cash.

Director.—A vague term with a variety of meanings. Usually as indefinite as he is unfathomable—when wanted.

Liquidator.—One who endeavors to gather up spilled milk or other liquids.

Creditor.—Those who own or have milk or other liquids thus spilled.

Stock.—Similar to space or time. The ignorant think it is infinite and exists everywhere. The wise know it exists only in the mind.

Broker.—He who has broken a bank.

Credit.—An extinct variety of an antediluvian bird of prey. The only proofs of its existence are the fossil remains of those it fed on.

Debit.—A voracious omnivorous animal, supposed to have caused the death and extinction of the bird of prey above mentioned.—*Grip.*

It is an ancient custom to put scents in clothes. John McCullough once bought a gold embroidered jacket from a Persian bazaar in Paris. It gave a lasting odor to every trunk in which he placed it. One day he looked it over and found a lump of musk and another of ambergris, stitched into the lining. It was a very old garment.

ODDS AND ENDS.

A HUNDRED YEARS.
A hundred years and it will be the same,
Beloved one,
As though you were across my pathway came
And drew my soul.

A hundred years and it will matter not
We meet by part,
Till all be over then—this earthly lot,
O loving heart!

But "then and there" I see so distant, dear—
So dim and far—
While "here and now," with needs so urgent, clear
Frets at each bar.

O years, roll swiftly in your onward flight
Till we shall cease;
Till, with eternity's unchanging light,
Comes restful peace!

It is stated that the cable car system is about to be introduced in the ancient city of Rome. Many streets there have sidewalks of stone steps, but no wagon ever rattles over the pavements, and the only means of getting from one part of the city to another is by walking.

A fellow who got out of a Michigan goal with a pair of shackles on his ankles made an Indiana woman believe that he was the victim of a private insane asylum, and she helped him get rid of the irons. While she was crying over his wrongs he stole her husband's watch off his hook.

A man has been found in New York who is a "fence" for dog stealers, and he deals only in stolen dogs. He buys the stolen creatures for little or nothing, returns them if a reward is offered and sells them if it isn't. And they do say he makes a very neat little income out of his out of his odd business.

Mr. Pullman ventured all he had on his first sleeping car, because, he says, "if I had built an \$8,000 car other would have said they could have improved on it. But when they saw the magnificence of the Pioneer and that it cost me \$18,000, everyone gave up the idea of entering into competition with me."

A Hartford youngster goes to church where the concluding amen of the prayer is sung by the choir. The other night, after he had said his prayers, he produced a harmonica from his pillow and astonished his mother by blowing a blast where the amen came in, remarking, "That's the way we do in church."

Drinking Before Meals.

An acquaintance of the writer who has suffered sorely from dyspepsia for a number of years, and has tried most of the numerous remedies a host of kind friends have recommended for her relief, hands us the following article from the *Medical News* with the request that it be printed in the *Scientific American*. Our dyspeptic friend has found great relief in following the directions, and it is hoped others may be also benefited.

In the morning the stomach contains a considerable quantity of mucus spread over and adherent to its walls. If food enters at this time the tenacious mucus will interfere, to some extent, with the direct contact between the food and the stomach necessary to provoke the secretion of gastric juice. A glass of water, taken before breakfast, passes through the stomach to the small intestines in continuous and unobstructed flow. It partly distends the stomach, stretching and to some extent overstretching the rugae; it thins and washes out most of the tenacious mucus; it increases the fulness of the capillaries of the stomach, directly if the water is warm, and indirectly in a reactionary way if it is cold; it causes peristalsis of the alimentary tract, wakes up (so to speak), and gives it a morning exercise and washing. Care must be taken not to give cold water when the circulation, either local or general, is so feeble as to make reaction improbable. We should not risk it in advanced age, nor in the feeble, whether old or young, nor should it be given in local troubles, like chronic gastric catarrh. In these cases it is best to give warm or hot water. The addition of salt is very beneficial. Such a time-honored custom as drinking soup at the beginning of a meal could only have been so persistently adhered to because of its having been found by experience to be the most appropriate time. It does exactly what warm or hot water, with the addition of salt does, and more, in that it is nutritive and excites the flow of gastric juice."

The Little Seed.
A little seed lay in the carter's path;
A little seed bowed in the shadow of his wrath;
A little shrub grew, by its roots laid fast;
Then a stout tree braved all the waters' blast.

A little cough started—'twas only light;
A little chill shivered the hours of night;
A little pain came and began to grow,
Then consumption laid all his brave strength low.

Be wise in time. Check the little cough, care the little chill, dispel the little pain, ere the little ailment becomes the strong, unconquerable giant of disease. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, taken in time, is a remedy for these ills.

A weeping rose tree in a garden at Koosteren, Holland, is so large that thirty performers lately gave a concert under its branches. It is 85 feet in circumference, and it has been estimated that it had 10,000 roses at the time of the performance.

"Just Hear That Child Cry!"
said Mrs. Smith to her sister, Mrs. Davis, as she heard of a child's shrieks come across the garden from a neighbor's house. "What kind of a woman have you for a neighbor? Does she abuse her children?" "No, indeed," replied Mrs. Davis. "She is one of the most tender mothers in existence. But you see she believes in the old-fashioned styles of doctoring. When a child needs physic, she fills a spoon with some nauseous dose, lays the little victim flat on her lap, holds his nose until he is forced to open his mouth for breath, when down goes the dreadful mess. Then comes the yell. 'No wonder,' said Mrs. Smith, 'Why doesn't she use Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets? They are effective without being harsh, and are as easy to take as sugar plums. I always give them to my children.' "And so do I," said Mrs. Davis.

Quill toothpicks come from France. The largest factory in the world is near Paris, where there is an annual product of 20,000,000 quills. The factory was started to make quill pens, but when these went out of use it was turned into a toothpick mill.

The cleansing, antiseptic and healing qualities of Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy are unequalled.