

"I did; I watched you. You placed them in one corner. I could put my finger on the place," said Miss Hastings.

"I locked the box and carried it with my own hands to my study. I placed it in the drawer of my writing-table, and locked that. I never parted with my keys to any one; as is my invariable rule. I placed them under my pillow. I slept soundly all night, and when I woke I found them there. As I tell you I have been to the box, and the notes are gone. I cannot understand it, for I do not see any indication of a theft, and yet I have been robbed."

Miss Hastings looked very thoughtful.

"You have certainly been robbed," she said. "Are you sure the keys have never left your possession?"

"Never for one single moment," he replied.

"Has any one in the house duplicate keys?" she asked.

"No. I bought the box years ago in Venice; it has a peculiar lock—there is not one in England like it."

"It is very strange," said Miss Hastings. "A thousand pounds is no trifle to lose."

Pauline Darrell, her face turned to the flowers, uttered no word.

"You might show some little interest, Pauline," said her uncle, sharply; "you might have the grace to affect it, even if you do not feel it."

"I am very sorry indeed," she returned, coldly. "I am grieved that you have had such a loss."

Sir Oswald looked pacified.

"It is not so much the actual loss of the money that has grieved me," he said; "I shall not feel it. But I am distressed to think that there should be a thief among the people I have loved and trusted."

"What a solemn council!" interrupted the cheery voice of Aubrey Langton. "What gloomy conspirators!"

Sir Oswald looked up with an air of great relief.

"I am so glad you are come, Aubrey; you can advise me what to do." And the baronet told the story of his loss.

Captain Langton was shocked, amazed; he asked a hundred questions, and then suggested that they should drive over to Audleigh Royal and place the affair in the hands of the chief inspector of police.

"You said you had not taken the numbers of the notes; I fear it will be difficult to trace them," he said, regretfully. "What a strange, mysterious robbery. Is there any one you suspect, Sir Oswald?"

No; in all the wide world there was not one that the loyal old man suspected of robbing him.

"My servants have always been to me like faithful old friends," he said, sadly; "there is not one among them who would hold out his hand to steal from me."

Captain Langton suggested that, before going to Audleigh Royal, they should search the library.

"You may have made some mistake, sir," he said. "You were tired last night, and it is just possible that you may have put the money somewhere else, and do not remember it."

"We will go at once," decided Sir Oswald.

Miss Hastings wished them success; but the proud face directed toward the flowers was never turned to them. The pale lips were never unclosed to utter one word.

After the gentlemen had left them, when Miss Hastings began to speak eagerly of the loss, Pauline raised her hand with a proud gesture.

"I have heard enough," she said. "I do not wish to hear one word more."

The robbery created a great sensation; inspectors came from Audleigh Royal, and a detective from Scotland Yard, but no one could throw the least light upon the subject. The notes could not be traced; they had been paid in from different sources, and no one had kept a list of the numbers.

Even the detectives seemed puzzled. Sir Oswald had locked up the notes in the box at night, he had kept the keys in his own possession, and he had found in the morning that the box was still locked and the notes were gone. It was a nine days' wonder. Captain Langton gave all the help he could, but as all search seemed useless and hopeless, it was abandoned after a time, and at the end of the week Captain Langton was summoned to London, and all hope of solving the mystery was relinquished.

CHAPTER XXII.

FULFILLING THE CONTRACT.

The preparations for the wedding went on with great activity; the rooms prepared for the bride were a marvel of luxury and beauty. There was a boudoir with rose-silk and white-lace hangings, adorned with most exquisite pictures and statuettes, with rarest flowers and most beautiful ornaments—a little fairy nook, over which every one went into raptures except Pauline; she never even looked at the alterations; she never mentioned them nor showed the least interest in them. She went on in her cold, proud, self-contained manner, hiding many thoughts in her heart.

"Miss Hastings," she said, one morning; "you can do me a favor. Sir Oswald has been saying that we must call at the Elms to see Lady Hampton and Miss Rocheford. I should refuse, but that the request exactly suits my plans. I wish to see Miss Rocheford; we will drive over this afternoon. Will you engage Lady Hampton in conversation while I talk to her niece?"

"I will do anything you wish, Pauline," returned Miss Hastings; "but, my dear child, be prudent. I am frightened for you—be prudent. It will be worse than useless for you to make an enemy of the future Lady Darrell. I will do anything to help you, anything to shield you from sorrow or harm, but I am frightened on your account."

Careless and demonstrations of affection were very rare with Pauline; but now she bent down with a softened face and kissed the anxious brow.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENTIFIC GLEANINGS.

A NEW SYSTEM OF PAINTING IRON.

A process, on a new principle, for protecting iron and steel from corrosion—especially when submerged—has been suggested. The theory of the process is essentially electrical, and its utility is based upon the hypothesis that the oxidation of iron and steel is much accelerated by, if not wholly due to, galvanic action. The metal to be protected is first coated with one or two primings of an oxide of a metal electro-positive to iron, to which any of the ordinary anti-fouling or oxide paints may be applied. These latter always contain the oxide of a metal electro-negative to iron; and this oxide will consequently always be reduced and the iron oxidized in time.

The priming employed in the new process is composed of oxide of zinc or magnesia, particularly the latter; and this not only protects the iron, but keeps it from contact with the outer coat. It is claimed that something of this kind has always been used whenever painting of iron has been even partially successful, but that the guiding principle—the use in the first place of a material electro-positive to iron—has been overlooked. Red lead as a priming does fairly well for a time, because, though lead is electro-negative to iron, it is only slightly so. Better protection is assured by the use of a distinctly basic material.

PAPER SLIPPERS.

Paper slippers are the latest form in which paper is introduced in new inventions. An Englishman has patented a system of manufacturing slippers, sandals, and other coverings for the feet out of paper. Paper pulp, or paper mache, is employed for the upper, which is moulded to the desired form and size, and a sole is provided made of paper or paste-board, leather board, or other suitable paper material, which is united to the upper by means of cement, glue or other adhesive material. The uppers are creased, embossed, or perforated at the instep and sides, which renders them somewhat pliable, and prevents their cracking while in use.

THE WATERING OF HORSES.

Some years ago there was a movement in favor of the plan of letting horses have water before them at all times, except, of course, when they came in hot. Some persons who gave the experiment a fair trial affirmed that horses so treated drank less in the course of the day than those watered from a bucket at stated intervals, nor is there anything irrational in this; while the advantages of the system seem self-evident. Horses are fed on dry and consequently thirst-producing food. If this thirst is not quenched, there is a tendency to fever, whereupon the groan comes to the rescue with his physic. If nature were allowed to find her own balance, this feverishness would probably never appear, as a horse never drinks for drinking sake. Moreover, a horse with water always before him never drinks much at a time and is never unfit for work at any moment; whereas the horse watered only at feeding times can never be used until some time after the bucket has gone round.

TO IMITATE OLD BRONZE.

The repeated applications to copper or brass of alternate washes of dilute acetic acid and exposure to the fumes of ammonia will give a very antique looking green bronze; but a quick mode of producing a similar appearance is often desirable. To effect this the articles may be immersed in a solution of one part of perchloride of iron in two parts of water. The tone assumes darkness with length of immersion. Or the articles may be boiled in a strong solution of nitrate of copper; or, lastly, they may be immersed in a solution of two ounces of nitrate of iron and two ounces of hyposulphite of soda in half a pint of water. Washing, drying, and burnishing complete the process.

SORGHUM SUGAR.

After all the protection and subsidies and bounties that have been bestowed upon that very political agricultural product, beet sugar, it is now, says Mr. Williams, in danger of being outwitted by Sorghum sugar. German and French chemists are working out the scientific elements of the problem. M. Biedermann's Centralblatt, V. P. fuel, describes his experiments in its cultivation, and finds that, when the seed ripens, there is fifteen per cent. of Saccharose present—before that time, only from one to three per cent. After the autumn cutting, the plants throw up a good fodder for sheep. It is stated in the same journal, that Sorghum may be cultivated in France at less cost than beet, and its yield of molasses is less, but good brandy is obtainable from it, and the residue makes good fodder. Beet and Sorghum are evidently running a close race, with the advantage of the start, and consequent experience and skill, on the side of the beet. But this may not be maintained.

SUFFICIENT REASON.—"Professor," said the student in pursuit of knowledge concerning the habits of animals, "why does a cat, while eating, turn her head first one way and then another?"—"For this reason," replied the professor, "that she cannot turn it both ways at once."

MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY.—Two thieves stole a well-filled trunk a few nights ago. On opening it they discovered that it contained nothing but religious tracts, and at the same moment they were captured by the police.