

On coming to herself, it was naturally supposed that she would be able to throw some light on the matter, but, to the surprise of all, she showed a nervous hesitation hardly to be reconciled with innocence. On further examination, it was found that the secretaire stood wide open, and that a quantity of papers and other articles were lying about in confusion, as if the contents of each drawer had been hastily turned inside out. By this time the police had arrived. With scarcely a moment's hesitation they pronounced that one of the inmates of the house must either have committed the crime, or at least been an accomplice in it. Evidently, also, there had been robbery added to murder; and, therefore, it was thought right to search the boxes of each member of the household. The servants were all willing; but when it came to Ernestine's turn to deliver up her keys, the young lady showed a strange unwillingness to do so. Of course the police persisted, and in a very little time discovered a large sum of money and several jewels belonging to the murdered lady carefully secreted at the bottom of her box.

"How does mademoiselle account for this money?" was the first question put to her.

"I do not know—I cannot tell—pray—do not ask me," was the hesitating reply.

The suspicions already attached to her were now considerably strengthened, and the police only discharged their duty in arresting her. The case was tried, and Ernestine Lamont found guilty.

A young lawyer named Bernard, whose knowledge of Ernestine's previous character made it very hard for him to believe her guilty, resolved to see her. After some little difficulty, permission was granted him to visit the condemned in prison. But if he went thither with any faith in her innocence, he left the prison without doubt of her guilt. Her answers to his questions were evasive and unsatisfactory.

On reaching home late that evening, he found a note lying on his table. It was from Ernestine, and ran as follows:

My dear Friend,—I feel that I owe you at least some explanation for my strange conduct, and will therefore put you in possession of the facts of the case. It is only forestalling my intention. This letter would have been delivered to you after my death

You are aware of the circumstances which made me regard the baroness as a mother. You are aware, too, of her husband's fatal propensity to the gaming-table, a passion which in course of time led to an estrangement between them. The baroness was very beautiful, and still young, and failing to find that love and affection which she had hoped her husband would show her, formed an unfortunate intrigue. I was horror-struck when she informed me of this; but it was not for me to blame her. As might be expected, no good could possibly result from this attachment. Her lover proved unworthy of her confidence, and succeeded, whether by threats or by menaces, I know not, in obtaining from her large sums of money. It was but a few days before her death that she confided this to me, and at the same time begged me to take care of her jewels and money for her in my box, as she dreaded lest her sordid lover should obtain possession of them. The last time I saw her alive was on the night she went to the Opera. At what hour she returned I know not, for she always had a private key with her. The rest you know.

"Hence, dear friend, you will understand my reluctance to have my boxes searched; and my evasive answers as to the money and jewels found in them.

"Had I told the truth, should I have been believed? No! And how could I say anything that would dishonour the good name of one who has been more than a mother to me? Besides, I did not know even the name of her secret lover, and I had never seen him. No; it is better as it is. I am ready to die. My secret to all save you, shall die with me. That you believe in my innocence is the only comfort I have left me.

"Your unhappy friend,

ERNESTINE."

"Thank God!" murmured the young man, pressing the paper to his lips. "Henceforth, I

will devote my life to prove your innocence to the world. God grant it may not yet be too late!"

Late though it was, Bernard at once repaired to the prefect's house, and after some difficulty procured admission. The prefect fortunately happened to be an old friend of Bernard's father, and it was because of this that the young man was admitted at so late an hour.

"But, my good friend," said the old man, after patiently listening to all he had to say, "believe me, it is a useless task; there is no doubt that the young woman is guilty either as principal or as accomplice. Still, as you so earnestly wish it, you shall be permitted to search the apartments of the murdered lady. And now good night," he added with a smile, "and let me hear the result of your investigations."

Early the next morning, Bernard, accompanied by a gendarme, repaired to the baroness's house. Everything lay exactly as it had been left on the fatal morning; for the house had been and was still in the custody of the police. Not a drawer, nor a cupboard escaped Bernard's notice. There was no violence visible on the windows, as if forcible admission had been gained from the outside. Nothing, in fact, presented itself which gave the slightest clue to the mystery.

The search had now occupied several hours, and Bernard felt that it was useless to remain there any longer. With a sad and heavy heart, therefore, he proceeded to leave the apartment. But in passing out into the entree, which was quite dark, his foot struck against something, which, on taking up, he found to be a hat. Thinking it belonged to the baron, he was about to hang it up with the others on the peg from which he supposed it to have fallen.

"That hat, monsieur, if you please; I do not remember to have seen it before. It is strange," remarked the gendarme, as he compared the hat in question with the others that hung up in the entree; "it is larger, and of a different shape to them!"

"Let me have it, my good friend; I will show it to the prisoner. If it should chance to belong to this secret lover of the murdered lady!" thought Bernard to himself, as he hurriedly drove to the prison.

Ernestine was anxiously expecting to see her friend, for he had promised to visit her that day again; and she wished to learn from his own lips whether he still believed in her innocence.

"Do you know this hat, Ernestine?" said Bernard, on entering the cell.

"That hat—good Heavens!—it is the very hat which the baron had on the night he left Paris," said Ernestine, in an excited manner.

"Impossible!—we compared it with the other hats—and this is much larger. I believe it belonged to the baroness's lover—"

"No—no—a thousand times no—it is the baron's—he bought it the very day he left. It was too large for him, and he asked me to put some wadding under the lining for him—see—if it be not there!"

"But, Ernestine, it must be fancy on your part—this hat never belonged to the baron! But—stay—you are right," added Bernard, as, on turning up the lining, the wadding fell out, and with it a piece of paper which had been used to add a little to its thickness. It was a bill written by the landlord of an hotel at Strasburg, made out in the baron's name, for a week's board and lodging. It was dated April 7,—just fourteen days after his departure from Paris.

Ernestine and Bernard looked at each other for a few moments in silence, as strange thoughts passed through the minds of each.

That it was the baron's hat was now proved—but how did it come there? Had he returned to Paris secretly before the murder? Was he the murderer?

Ernestine turned deadly pale.

"Do you suppose that the baron—" she gasped.

"Is the murderer?" added Bernard, finishing the sentence. "Yes! I do. But I will go at once to the prefect."

For the first time since her condemnation a faint ray of hope was kindled in Ernestine's heart. The sight of Bernard, her old friend in happier days, had indeed excited a wish to live in her young breast.

"How thankful I am I did not say anything at the trial. The good God will protect me!"

Bernard now left the prison and hastened to the house of the prefect.

"Well! and what did you find?" asked the old man, smiling sadly at his young friend, who rushed into the room without waiting to be announced.

"Be good enough to examine this hat," said Bernard, as he handed it to him, and recounted to him the manner in which he had found it, and what Ernestine had subsequently told him.

"Her husband!—he the murderer! Yes, it is plain—and we have been accusing an innocent girl!" ejaculated the prefect, carefully examining the hat; "but leave me now; I must think it over. But let me urge secrecy on you, and depend on me."

To be continued.

DIAMOND AND ROSES.

ADAM Smith, in his "Wealth of Nations," shows, in a few simple words, the value of the diamond. Contrasting it with water, from the very purest of which the diamond receives its best name and recommendation, he remarks that, though nothing is so useful as water, it will purchase scarcely anything. It will purchase very little money: only a small amount of coin or any other commodity can be had in exchange for it. On the other hand, a diamond has scarcely any value in use; but a great quantity of coin or other goods may be had in exchange for it. The difference between value in use and value in exchange could not be more lucidly explained to the very meanest capacity.

But the diamond belongs as much to the poet as to the statistician or the political economist. Pope has chosen to draw his contrast, too—not between the diamond and water, but between the gem and a flower:—

Tho' the same sun, with all-diffusive rays,
Blush in the rose, and in the diamond blaze,
We prize the stronger effort of his power,
And justly set the gem above the flower.

This judgment, however unquestioned it may have been in the saloons of the "great Anna" and "great Brunswick" periods, will hardly be accepted now. There is no stronger effort of the sun in giving brilliancy to the diamond than there is in giving colour to the rose. The "blush" of the one and the "blaze" of the other are equal as the result of effort, for each is of God's work and of God's will. Whatever may be the difference of their value in exchange, we know that a single rose in the hair of a fair young girl adds more to the adornment of her person than a string of diamonds. Is not the *blush* of an innocent, happy girl a more delicious thing to see than the *blaze* of the most profusely diamonded woman? And then, chemists now are said to be able to reduce the diamond to its primitive charcoal; but rose-leaves are still rose-leaves; though dead, their odour is a delicious memory of the bygone "time of roses."

Girls should be like the flowers that adorn them—pure to the sight and sweet in memory. Bright, but impenetrably hard, diamonds teem with peril to their wearers. There is a charm in them, St. Ambrose says, which is not known to those who bear their yoke. Women who wear diamonds, said the saint, may be as bright and dazzling as the gems, but their hearts, assuredly, will grow as hard.

Such are the opinions of political economist, poet, and saint, on diamonds, in various lights. The fact is, that they are very excellent and useful things at fitting seasons and on fitting persons. Even to most fitting persons every season is not fitting. They become the Queen on her throne in the Palace of Westminster; but her Majesty would herself laugh at the idea of wearing them when she is seated at her spinning-wheel. So with other ladies, high, but less high than this in the social scale; yet, to all these ladies, and to all others, during every hour of waking life, the rose is becoming and in season; and in respect of such suitableness, we justly set the gem below the flower.