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JOS. TILT

CASE

By...
Emile
Gaboriau

Prosper remained alone in the study. Notwithstanding the disordered state of his mind, he could not but perceive that his situation was every minute becoming more serious. Seating himself on a sofa near the fireplace, he was absorbed in the most gloomy forebodings when the banker's chamber door suddenly opened and a beautiful girl appeared upon the threshold. She was tall and slender. A loose morning gown, confined at the waist by a simple black ribbon, betrayed to advantage the graceful elegance of her figure. Her black eyes were large and soft, her complexion had the creamy pallor of a white camellia, and her beautiful dark hair, carelessly held together by a tortoise shell comb, fell in a profusion of soft curls upon her exquisite neck. She was M. Fauvel's niece, Madeleine, of whom he had spoken not long before. Seeing Prosper Bertomy in the study, where probably she expected to find her uncle alone, she could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise.

"Ah!" Prosper started up as if he had received an electric shock. His eyes, a moment before so dull and heavy, all at once sparkled with joy as if he had caught a glimpse of a messenger of hope.

"Madeleine," he cried; "Madeleine!" The young girl blushed crimson. She seemed about to hastily retreat and stepped back; but, Prosper having advanced toward her, she was overcome by something stronger than her will and extended her hand, which he seized and pressed eagerly. They stood thus face to face, but with bowed heads.

Finally Madeleine said in a scarcely audible voice:

"You, Prosper—you!" These words broke the spell. Prosper dropped the white hand which he held and answered bitterly:

"Yes, this is Prosper, the companion of your childhood—suspected, accused of the most disgraceful theft—Prosper, whom your uncle has just delivered up to justice and who, before the day is over, will be arrested and thrown into prison."

Madeline, with a terrified gesture, cried in a tone of profound sympathy: "Good heavens! Prosper, what are you saying?"

"What! Do you not know? Have not your aunt and cousins told you?" "They have told me nothing. I have scarcely seen my cousins this morning, and my aunt is so ill that I felt uneasy and came to tell uncle. But for heaven's sake speak. Tell me what has happened."

Prosper hesitated. Perhaps it occurred to him to open his heart to Madeleine, of revealing to her his most secret thoughts. A remembrance of the past coming up chilled his confidence. He sadly shook his head and replied: "Thanks, mademoiselle, for this proof of interest, the last, doubtless, that I shall ever receive from you. But allow me, by being silent, to spare you distress and myself the mortification of blushing before you."

Madeline interrupted him with an imperious gesture: "I insist upon knowing," she said. "Alas, mademoiselle!" answered Prosper. "You will only too soon learn my misfortune and my disgrace. Then, yes, then you will applaud yourself for what you have done."

But she became more urgent. Instead of commanding she entreated, but Prosper was inflexible.

"Your uncle is in the adjoining room, mademoiselle, with the commissary of police and a detective. They will soon return. I entreat you to retire that they may not find you here."

As he spoke he gently pushed her through the door, she resisting, and closed it upon her. It was time, for the next moment the commissary and M. Fauvel entered. They had visited the main entrance and waiting room and had heard nothing of what had passed in the study. But Fanferlot had heard for them. This excellent bloodhound had not lost sight of the cashier. He said to himself: "If he believes himself to be alone, his face will betray him. I shall detect a smile or a wink that will mean something."

Leaving M. Fauvel and the commissary to pursue their investigations, he posted himself to watch. He saw the door open and Madeleine appear upon the threshold. He lost not a single word or gesture of the rapid scene which had passed between Prosper and the young girl. It mattered little that every word of this scene was an enigma. M. Fanferlot was skillful enough to complete the sentences he did not understand. As yet he only had a suspicion, but a suspicion is a point to start from. He was prompt in building a plan upon the slightest incident, thinking he saw in the past of these people whom he did not know glimpses of a domestic drama. If the commissary of police is a skeptic, the detective has faith. He believes in evil. "This is the situation," said he to himself. "This man loves the young lady, who is really very pretty, and as he is quite handsome I suppose his love is returned. This love affair vexes the banker, who, not knowing how to get rid of the importunate lover by fair

means, has to resort to foul and plans this pretended robbery, which is very ingenious."

Thus to M. Fanferlot's mind the banker had simply robbed himself, and the innocent cashier was the victim of an odious machination.

Meanwhile, the search up stairs completed, the searchers returned to Prosper's office. The commissary, who had seemed so calm when he first came, now looked serious. The moment for taking a decisive part having come, he hesitated.

"You see, gentlemen," he began, "our search has only confirmed our first opinion."

M. Fauvel and Prosper assented.

"And what do you think, M. Fanferlot?" continued the commissary.

The detective did not answer. Occupied in studying the safe lock, he manifested signs of surprise. Evidently he had just made an important discovery.

Noticing this, M. Fauvel, Prosper and the commissary rose and surrounded him.

"Have you discovered any trace?" asked the banker eagerly.

Fanferlot turned around with a disinterested air. He reproached himself for not having concealed his impressions.

"Oh," said he carelessly, "I have discovered nothing of importance."

"But we should like to know," said Prosper.

"I have merely convinced myself that this safe has been recently opened or shut, I know not which, with great violence and haste."

"Why so?" asked the commissary, becoming attentive.

"Do you see this scratch near the lock?"

The commissary took a magnifying glass that the detective had used, stooped down and carefully examined the safe. He saw a light scratch on the outer coat of varnish.

"I see it," said he. "But what does that prove?"

"Oh, nothing at all," said Fanferlot, "as I said before."

Fanferlot said this, but he did not think it. This scratch recently made had for him a significance that escaped the others. He had discovered a confirmation of his suspicions. If the cashier had stolen millions, there was no occasion for his being in a hurry. The banker, creeping down in the dead of the night softly for fear of awakening the boy in the anteroom in order to rifle his own money safe, had every reason to tremble, to hurry, to hastily withdraw the key, which, slipping along the lock, scratched the varnish. Resolved to unravel by himself the tangled thread of this affair, the detective determined to keep his conjectures to himself. For the same reason he was silent as to the interview which he had overheard between Madeleine and Prosper. He hastened to withdraw attention from the scratch.

"To conclude," he said, addressing the commissary, "I am convinced that no one outside of the bank could have obtained access here. The safe is intact. No suspicious pressure has been used on the movable buttons. I can affirm that the lock has not been tampered with by burglar's tools or false keys. These who opened the safe knew the word and had the key."

To Be Continued.

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LINK WITH THE PAST

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Was Erected by Henry VIII. on Site of Religious Hospital for Leprous Women—Bluff King Hal Spent Romantic Days Here With Anne Boleyn—Here, Too, Was Married Late Queen Victoria.

This royal property, built by Henry VIII. on the site of a religious hospital for leprosy women, dedicated to St. James, has parts yet existing of the original palace.

When first erected it stood in the midst of meadows and trees, and game abounded. The fields became the park, and were enclosed as a private demesne. Bluff King Hal passed romantic days here with Anne Boleyn, commemorated in the initials H. A. let into the chimney-piece of the old Presence Chamber.

From that period there has been an impressive succession of historical memories. Mary Tudor breathed her last within the palace walls, and it was there Charles I. passed his final hours. He took leave of his children there the day before his execution, when he walked from St. James' through the park guarded by a regiment of foot to the scaffold before Whitehall. The Prince of Orange went straight to the palace. John Evelyn in his diary, Dec. 18, 1688, made the note: "All the world go to see the Prince at St. James," where there is a great Court. There I saw him and several of my acquaintance who came over with him. He is very stately, serious, and reserved."

Henry Tudor's gatehouse and turrets of red brick still face St. James' street. The archway leads into a quadrangle, the Color court, so called in old time from the colors of the military guard being placed there. The practice of changing the guard coming down from remote date, consists of a detachment of the sovereign's soldiers arriving at 11 a. m.,



AMBASSADOR'S COURT, ST. JAMES.

accompanied by their band, for the purpose of exchanging the regimental standard and handing over the keys to the incoming officer in charge. Many years since the ceremonial was abolished in the Color court, being afterwards removed to the outer court opposite the wall of Marlborough House.

On the western side of the gateway is the Chapel Royal, chiefly noticeable in the interior for its ceiling, with a quaint design in painted squares ascribed to Hans Holbein. In 1583 the "Children of the Chapel Royal," later called the "Children of the Revels," were formed into a theatrical company. Handel's oratorio Esther was first sung by the vocalists of this chapel. A curious levy, "Spur Money," used to be made by the boy choristers at the door when a visitor entered in spurs. But the "offender might challenge the youngest singer 'to repeat his gamut.' The Duke of Wellington found himself accosted for the fine. "Repeat your gamut," quickly exclaimed the soldier. The boy failed, and the Duke passed in. It is said that the fittings and decorations of the palace and chapel on the occasion of the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (Feb. 10, 1840) cost upwards of £9,000.

West of the Color court is Ambassador's court; and a little beyond Stables, its designation arising from the buildings covering the site of the ancient palace stables. The State apartments contain numerous historic memorials.

King Victor Minded the Cow.

While out for a walk in the country alone—a recreation of which he is inordinately fond—King Victor felt very thirsty, and, seeing a woman milking a cow, he asked her for a glass of milk. "I can't give you any of this," said the woman, "but if you'll mind the cow I'll go to the house and get you some." Away she went with many injunctions not to let the animal stray, and the King, like another Alfred, minded the cow till the woman returned with a glass of icy cold milk. Then the King asked where all the farm hands had gone. "Oh, they're always running off now, to try to see the King!" answered the woman. "But, bless you, though I'd like to see the little man, I think of work of first." "Well, you see him, little mother," said he, "without running away from your work." "You're joking," said the woman, who thought that a king could not be so quietly dressed. But when he placed a gold coin in her hand she fell on her knees, while he continued his walk, laughing at the encounter.

Waste Paper Boxes.

Waste paper boxes are now being used by a number of towns and cities for keeping the streets clean, and the quantity of paper thrown into these receptacles shows that the people are realizing to a considerable extent the desirability of not littering the streets. The idea of waste paper boxes is one that can be profitably adopted by any city or town which desires to keep the streets free from the litter of paper, as they do much toward keeping the thoroughfares in that neat condition which marks a well kept town.



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