

Diamond Cut Diamond OR, THE ROUT OF THE ENEMY.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

"Good afternoon, Madame de Brefour. I did not observe who it was who entered the carriage at the last station. I hope you are well."

Rose inclined her head coldly. What ever surprise or disgust she may have experienced at the encounter, she showed no outward sign of agitation.

"How is your father-in-law, Madame?"

This being a polite question, she was perforce constrained to give it a polite answer.

"Thank you; Monsieur de Brefour is now a constant invalid, I regret to say."

"Does he suffer much?" The voice was kind, and Matthew Dane leant forward as though really anxious to know.

A softened look came over her beautiful face; and the tenderness that is in every true woman's heart towards the weak and the poor and the miserable, made her lip tremble, and brought a dewy sadness into the heaven-blue of her eyes.

"Dreadfully at times," she answered; "but he is so patient and good—"

"I should like very much to come and see him, it would cheer him up to have a visitor who would sit and chat with him."

In a moment the whole expression of her face changed. She was no longer the tender sick nurse, opening her heart to the expression of kindly sympathy, but the watchful guardian of the peace and safety of the creature whom it was her mission to protect.

"You are very kind," she answered coldly, "but that is impossible. Monsieur de Brefour receives no visitors, ill excitement and agitation is strictly forbidden to him, he sees no one save his attendants and myself."

"And it would be dangerous for his health to see even an old friend like myself?"

"It would be dangerous to his health to see you," she repeated, altering his words somewhat pointedly.

Mr. Dane threw himself back in his seat with a sigh.

"Ah, poor man! poor man!" he ejaculated, "what a sad state of things to be sure! And if so small an excitement is likely to be prejudicial to him, how anxious you must be to ward off any real trouble and pain from him."

And then he sighed again and looked at her furtively from between his closed eyelids.

It may be assumed that by this time Matthew Dane was thoroughly enjoying himself; to pit himself against any fellow-creature was always a pleasure to him, but when the battle was being fought out with a woman whom he had reason to believe was unscrupulous and as clever as himself, the contest was doubly delightful.

He was like the conventional war-horse, who, scenting the strife from afar, goes forth to meet it with a sense of rapture. He had got her in his coils, he had but to close his hand and crush her, but he prepared himself to watch her hopeless struggle with a perfect ecstasy of joy. It was a delight to him to see the doubt and mistrust in her eyes as she slowly repeated his words.

"Real trouble?—of what kind do you mean?"

"Well, such as, for instance, any fresh complication concerning his unfortunate son."

She turned white to the lips and shrank a little back in her seat with a gesture of distress.

"His son! You forget, Mr. Dane, my husband is dead."

"Ah, my dear lady! Now do you really take me for a fool?" he cried, with a light bubbling laugh of mingled contempt and amusement. "That is all very well to keep up before the world but between you and I surely the farce may well be dropped. You have hidden him very cleverly between you—you and the old gentleman—but you know I never did believe much in evidences of his death, although craps and a widow's cap became you ravishingly, madame,—here he made her a little bow, part mocking, part complimentary, and then he sat bolt upright and opened his eyes wide at her, and they flashed, like the cold fire of metal that is clashed, into hers; and latterly I have discovered—"

"I know that Leon de Brefour is alive!"

There was a brief silence, she was still very pale, but she did not look frightened, her eyes met his steadily.

"That is so easy to say, is it not?" she cried contemptuously. "We all say we know, when for the most part we only guess. A clever mind like yours, Mr. Dane, no doubt is always guessing, and for 'knowledge' a few facts and proofs are necessary in this hard, prosaic world of ours."

From the very bottom of his soul he admired her. What a woman she was! With such a wife as that the world might have been at his feet!

But for all his admiration he had no intention of sparing her.

"My facts and proofs are quite simple," he answered quietly. "I had you followed on your last visit to the northern outskirts of London."

"By a blundering detective, who interpreted a visit of charity to a bed-ridden relative of my mother's into the existence of a person whom you had made it his interest to discover," she cried scornfully.

"Not so, madame. I am not yet so devoid of the rudiments of common sense as to trust my affairs to the dull wits of what you very appropriately call the 'blundering' professional detective. The person who followed you was a trusted friend, whose interests are my own, and who was able to identify the man he went to look for."

"How can we identify what one does and what one is?" she ejaculated. And whilst she spoke, ways and means were flashing quick as lightning

through her brain, ways of getting down that very night to that lonely house amongst the Hampstead lanes, means of smuggling forth its wretched inmates and conveying him to some safer refuge.

"But he did see," replied her Inquisitor, calmly. "After you had gone he came to his window and looked forth after you, and he held a lighted candle in his hand, and the pale flame flickered across his features. Then some one came and pulled him back, and drew the curtain across the window, but not before the watcher had seen enough to swear to the face of Leon de Brefour."

"Who was it?" her lips framed the words, her eyes were all but audible.

A presentiment of the truth seemed to paralyze her—the answer was scarcely unexpected.

"It was Albert Trichet."

Then, for the first time, there was a real terror in her eyes; she looked about her vaguely, like a hunted animal, and a sudden shudder convulsed her frame.

Well, too well, she had had cause to dread that hated name—the bloodhound who had been set to dog the footsteps of her unlucky husband for months before, apparently, a breath of suspicion had rested upon him; who had dined at her table, shaken her by the hand, laughed with her, brought her books and flowers, sung French chansons with her in the evening, whilst her husband and father-in-law were smoking their cigarettes in the veranda without; and who, through all this simple and friendly intercourse, had been sending daily bulletins home of everything that her husband said and did, from morning till night. If that fiend was again upon her footsteps, of what avail was it to keep up the struggle?

Matthew Dane was watching her with a smile.

"You don't seem to like poor Trichet?"

Then Rose turned upon him.

"Do not dare to speak of him!" she cried, and the blaze of indignation that flashed into her beautiful face almost cowed him, hardened and callous as he was.

"Why do you mention his foul name to me? It is an insult!"

And then there happened to Matthew Dane something that had not happened to him for years. He lost his temper.

"Ah! a good joke that, from the wife of a thief!"

The moment he had spoken the words he would have given worlds to unsay them. The train was slackening at the Gloucester Road Station. It was his destination, but it was not here. Nevertheless, she rose and lowered the window, and got out without a word. He followed her quickly.

"Madame de Brefour, I beg you ten thousand pardons," he said, as he walked by her side, along the platform, with a face of the profoundest respect and repentance.

She answered him not a word. They went up the steps together, amongst the crowd, and presently found themselves in the comparatively empty streets. Rose did not know where she was going, she only wanted to get rid of him. Old Dane was exhausting himself in apologies. He could see how, by that one angry sentence, he had lost his power over her, for the time at least, and he could have killed her because she had so far triumphed over him as to make him lose his self-control. Yet through all his rage and anger there was present an almost comic wonder at her talent. She was as great a diplomatist as himself, and with all the armoury of female wit and fascination to back her up into the bargain. Of course all her righteous indignation at Trichet's name, all her proud silence now, were nothing but a part and parcel of the same thing, her superhuman power of playing the cards in her hand to their utmost advantage. This was how it seemed to Matthew Dane, to whom goodness and truth, and kind-heartedness, were but contemptible synonyms with idiocy, but to whom Power of Brain was as a god, to be worshipped above all other gods.

Then, as he continued to apologise, and she continued to be silent, one of those small things happened that are perpetually turning the whole current of human life by their apparently trivial and meaningless influence. It began to rain; Madame de Brefour had no umbrella, and Mr. Dane unfolded his and held it up over her head.

Now it is absolutely and morally impossible for a lady to be beholden to a gentleman for the shelter of his umbrella—which is extended to her at the sacrifice of his own Lincoln and Bennett—and that she should remain insensible to the attention.

An umbrella, thus distended, brings about an instinctive rapprochement. Many is the love-tale that has been whispered, multifarious the quarrels that have been patched up, numberless the misunderstandings cleared away, beneath the mystic shade of a whalebone and silk.

Thus, as Mr. Dane unfurled his peace offering, and continued to apologise the while for his cruel and unmanly reproach, Rose found herself constrained to say—"Thank you." And, in saying it, her anger gave way and her soul became softened.

Thereupon Mr. Dane was not slow in pushing his advantage. All unspoken to her, every step had been taking them nearer to his house in Cromwell Road, and now they stood in front of his very door-step.

"I fear there is going to be a heavy storm, Madame; I must beg of you to come in until it clears up. This is my house."

"Your house?" she repeated, standing still just because he stood still,

and she could not get away from the advantages bestowed upon her by that umbrella—"Your house?" And then she looked up at it in a puzzled way, and it flashed upon her all at once that she had walked into a very complete little trap all of her own accord.

"Will you walk into my parlour?" Said the spider to the fly.

And she walked in. There was nothing else to be done. She had got out of her train, without an ulterior thought, in her rage and indignation, and there must elapse a whole hour before she could get another one. It was raining heavily, and she could not walk back to the station, without getting wet through.

So she went into the house, and sat down in Mr. Dane's study, in a comfortable arm-chair, which he drew politely forward for her.

CHAPTER XXII.

There is no sort of doubt that every living man and woman is enormously affected by those outer influences which, in themselves, may be reckoned to be but of very small importance indeed. "Surroundings" are things which the ignorant may scoff at, but which the wise man will not be so foolishly as to set at naught.

"A Rose by any other name" would—in spite of the immortal William—lose a large share of its charms, and a lovely woman in a wig would appeal to mankind with so much force as if she were clad in velvet and diamonds. Or, again, put her into a sordid and dingy lodging, and will one in a thousand be bold enough to affirm, that the same subtle charm will cling to her presence as in her own fragrant and rose-tinted boudoir?

Women seldom do disregard these things. It is man who is apt to despise them—often to his own discomfort.

There is a homely and somewhat vulgar proverb, which explains tritely where and how a barn-door fowl can crow to the best advantage. And it is to this proverb that I would—as I do so gladly—refer.

Matthew Dane may have recalled it to his mind, as he wheeled forward that luxurious arm-chair for his visitor, placed a cushion at her back, and a footstool beneath her feet. To a certainty, Madame de Brefour remembered it.

"He has trapped me nicely," she said to herself, with a grim sense of impending defeat, "one must speak civilly to a man in his own house."

The umbrellas had been the beginning of defeat, the study arm-chair finished and settled it.

"Now we can talk," said Mr. Dane pleasantly, sitting down opposite to her and rubbing his hands one over the other with a seraphic smile, and a comfortable inner sense of regained superiority. "You and I, my dear lady, have surely no object in quarrelling with each other, have we?"

"That depends," demurred Rose somewhat coldly.

"Come, come, don't be hard upon me. Why shouldn't we come to an understanding in this matter? Now did you not come to see me a little while ago in the City with the object of asking me to give you a written paper, a sort of free pass as it were,—past, present and future—for your unlucky husband?"

I asked you to give me an assurance of pardon for his sin, in order to bring peace to the mind of his unhappy father."

"Well, that is much the same. Perhaps you desire to take back the erring sheep to the bosom of conjugal affection?"

He eyed her narrowly, and he saw how involuntarily she shuddered with disgust and revulsion at the suggestion.

He smiled. It was clear as daylight to him.

"Well, then we are agreed! I am not at all averse to giving you such a written assurance, signed and witnessed if you wish it, of forgiveness and of peace—for the sake as you say of that poor old father, whose melancholy condition you have described so touchingly."

She had never done more than hint at it, but the woman's loving heart carried her away.

"Ah, then indeed you will be good!" she cried, clasping her hands together in her agitation. "You will do this one good action? Then God will surely bless and reward you!"

Perhaps if she had not been resting in his arm-chair she would not have been guilty of the weakness of this outburst of feeling.

He smiled. Such a smile as Satan might have smiled when first our Mother Eve fell into the guile of his devices, and after the smile he sighed and looked down.

"Ah, yes! But then what on your side, are you, dear lady, going to do for me?"

"To the end of my days I will pray for you," she answered quickly.

And Mr. Dane smiled anew. What to him would be the prayers of all the archangels of Heaven?

"Many thanks," he answered politely, "but I think besides that, we must make a little compact." And then he thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, raised his eyebrows with a nice ingenious expression such as would not have discredited Mr. Irving, and pursed his lips up into a dubious pout, as though to say: "It's very hard on me, you see, but I have to be just in this matter."

"A compact?" she repeated slowly.

It began to dawn upon her that something more lay behind—something about which she was as yet in absolute ignorance.

"Well, yes. We may as well be explicit, you know. If I, for instance, agree—in writing mind you, signed and sealed—to let you alone, it would only be fair, wouldn't it, that you should agree to let me alone?"

"To let you alone?" she repeated in genuine amazement. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, to cease from obstructing my plans."

"Frankly, Mr. Dane, I do not in the very least understand you. You are talking to me in riddles."

She was looking at him with a blank surprise.

He leant forward with both elbows upon the table, so that his face came near to hers, his eyes, no longer veiled and mysterious, flashed at her with that keen hawk-like glance of power with which he knew well how to bend his fellow-creatures to his force of will.

"Let my nephew go, then!" he said below his breath, but in a whisper that was as clear and cutting as the raps of a hammer.

From brow to throat the crimson blood flushed in a torrent over her face: all the consciousness of a hidden love betraying itself in the uncontrollable weakness. She was so overwhelmed with surprise, so utterly taken aback by the suddenness of the attack, that her confusion of heart leapt into her face with the strength of nature itself. In that fatal moment her secret lay before her.

A thousand tongues shouting it forth upon the hill tops could not have proclaimed it to him more certainly and unalterably than did that cruel blush.

He threw himself back into his chair laughing softly. She was in his power now; for all her courage, for all her cleverness, she had been unable to save herself—she was his, his to torture and to punish, his to bend to his will and to crush beneath his feet.

GROWN-UP BOYS

Most Men Retain All the Curiosity of Their Youth.

A man stopped in front of a freshly-painted door on which hung a sign "Fresh Paint." He looked at it a moment and then ran the tip of his finger along it, making a mark thereon, and carrying off the paint on his finger.

He looked at his finger and at the mark on the door incredulously, as if it could not be possible. He had been feeling for fresh paint a long time, but had always been just too late to find it wet.

"There!" said an old man who had observed the paint tester; "that shows the strain of boy left in every man; the bit of idle curiosity that only comes out once in a while."

"A boy always touches wet paint to see if it is really wet, and it is the same strain that makes the man of affairs do it. You would suppose that a grown man had enough serious things to think of not to care whether the paint was fresh or not—but he hasn't."

"There are a large number of things that will excite the idle curiosity of the man who has not had the boy knocked out of him. A horse down in the street will attract crowds of this kind. A gathering in the street at which the center of interest is beyond his view will hold him mystified and curious until he can see what it is."

"The antics of an Italian organ-grinder's monkey will hold him entranced until he comes to himself. A man stamping a paving block or the operations necessary to repairing a hole in the street will arouse his curiosity. Bless you, he is a boy again, with all a boy's idleness and curiosity. It is in us all in some degree, and in some others of us in a very alarming degree."

MEN WHOM SURGEONS ADMIRE.

Two Men Who Survived Almost Every Form of Accident.

The old proverb, "While there's life there's hope," gains a good deal of force from these brief sketches of men who triumphantly survived almost every form of accident:

A few months ago died Thomas Rushton of Walkden, Lancashire. Most of his life was spent in hospitals consequent on his many mishaps. When five years old he fractured both his thighs, and before he had fairly recovered he fell downstairs and sustained a double fracture. Thenceforward his life was one long series of misfortunes, for besides breaking both legs twenty-four times, he sustained many other injuries and underwent countless operations.

A short time ago the Lancet mentioned the case of a man who had fractured his limbs six times, and on each occasion the accident occurred on the same date—namely, August twenty-sixth. Before he was sixteen he had met with five such mishaps, so he resolved for the future always to remain at home on the fatal twenty-sixth. It chanced, however, that twenty-three years later, forgetting his resolution, he went to work on the unlucky day, and on his return slipped down and broke his leg.

INDIANS THE FIRST SMOKERS.

Unquestionably smoking had already been practised by the Indians for centuries when Columbus first reached those shores. It was with them to a great extent a form of religious ceremonial. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, the famous ethnologist, thinks that it had its beginning in the blowing tube of the medical man. Ignorant savages are disposed to regard the human breath as possessing magical properties, and it may be supposed that burning leaves were introduced into the tube for the purpose of making the breathing visible. The Indians smoked many kinds of plants such as sumac, red willow bark, and the leaves of the kinikinnick or bear berry, and tobacco doubtless was a discovery resulting from a selection of the fittest.

SPRING SMILES.

She scornfully—I believe he only married her for her money. He, decidedly—Well, he has certainly earned it.

Miss Beautifull—Doesn't a man's second love usually differ from his first love? Aunt Broadhead—Yes, she generally has more money.

Pete—Pop, what does Eureka mean? Father—That is what the wisest man said upon the occasion when he discovered his lost collar button.

I hear that you assisted at the post mortem examination on your old enemy said Garwell to a surgeon of his acquaintance. Yes; I cut him dead.

A pun, remarked the pedant, is merely a play on words. Yes; answered the frivolous person. They call it a play; but as a rule it seems more like arduous and unnecessary work.

Do you think it proper, said the man who was trying to keep his temper, to laugh at a man who slips on a banana peel by accident? Well, replied the spectator, apologetically, I laughed by accident, too. I didn't think of such a thing until I saw you.

But you will deny the statement that you are a thief suggested the reporter. Of course I won't, replied the politician. If I deny that it will simply give my enemies a chance to charge me with something worse. No, sir; I'll deny nothing.

I notice a coldness between you and Mrs. Nextdoor. What is the trouble? She sent her little boy over yesterday for a stepladder we borrowed of her two years ago. The artful woman let it stay here all that time so she could end for it some day and make me feel cheap.

That young man, said the citizen, pointing to a sharp-featured youth across the street, has made fame both for himself and this, his native village. As to how? asked the stranger. Simply by sending telegrams of congratulation, or condolence, as the occasion called for, to prominent persons.

HOW TO GET STRONG.

Nature Should be Assisted to Throw off the Poisons that Accumulate in the System During the Winter Months.

Thousands of people not really ill require a tonic at this season. Close confinement in badly ventilated houses, shops and school rooms during the winter months makes people feel depressed, languid and "out of sorts."

Nature must be assisted in throwing off the poison that has accumulated in the system during these months, else people fall an easy prey to disease. A tonic is needed and Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People is the greatest tonic medicine in the world. These pills make rich, red blood; strengthen tired nerves, and make dull, listless men, women and children feel bright, active and strong.

Mr. John Siddons, London, Ont., says: "I can speak most favorably of the virtue of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. They prove invaluable in strengthening and toning up the system when debilitated. Having used them for some time past I can speak most favorably of their beneficial results. As an investigator of the constitution they are all that they claim to be."

But you must get the genuine Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. Imitations never cured anyone, and there are numerous pink colored imitations against which the public is cautioned. The genuine are sold only in boxes the wrapper around which bears the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People." If your dealer does not keep them send to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., and they will be mailed post paid at 50c a box or six boxes for \$2.50.

ONTARIO'S MINERAL OUTPUT.

The Yield for 1898 Represented a Million and a Half.

Mr. Archibald Blue, of the Bureau of Mines, has practically completed his tables of returns in connection with Ontario's mineral production for 1898. Nickel is still her most extensively developed industry. The copper and nickel mines of the Sudbury country gave employment to an average of 610 men during 1898, and the wages paid to them amounted to \$315,500; as against \$253,256 in 1897, and \$240,151 in 1896. All the ore produced was smelted, reduced to matte, and then exported to the United States to be refined. Eight million three hundred and seventy-three thousand, five hundred and sixty pounds of refined copper were produced, valued at \$288,050, and the produce of fine nickel was 5,567,190 pounds, valued at \$514,220. These valuations are based on the selling price of the matte, which is figured to be one third of the market price of the refined metal. The total value of both metals produced in 1898 was \$782,300, and in 1897 was \$559,710. In 1896 it stood at \$247,151.

RECKONING FROM HOURS.

Since the beginning of May a new system of reckoning the hours has been in force in Belgium, upon being represented by 12 and midnight by 24 or 0, according to circumstances. A train starting exactly at midnight is said to leave at 0 hour, and one arriving at that time is considered due at 24 o'clock. The dials of existing clocks at railway stations have been adapted to the new system by placing the numbers 13 to 24 under the 1 to 12.