

# The Diamond Coterie

BY LAWRENCE C. LYNCH.

(CONTINUED.)

If her own honor were threatened she could not have been more troubled and full of fear; for in rebellion, in self-contempt, in a fierce burst of rage against the heart she could not control, Constance Wardour, heiress and queen absolute, was forced to confess to that heart that Clifford Heath's happiness was her happiness too.

Having been forced to recognize this fact, against her wish and will, Constance came to a better understanding with herself, and she confessed to herself, with cheeks aflame at the recollection, that her petulant outbreak, and shameful accusation against Doctor Heath, was but the mutinous struggle of the head against the heart's acknowledged master. Too late came this self confession. Sybil Lamotte's letter had never been found; the mystery surrounding its disappearance, remained a mystery; and, how could she recall her accusation, while the circumstances under which it was made remained unchanged? Realizing that she owed him reparation, she was yet powerless to make it.

"It would be equivalent to a confession, that I could not be happy without his friendship," she said, hotly. "And he would not accept an apology while his innocence remained unproven. Let me suffer the consequences of my own folly; I deserve it; but," setting her white teeth resolutely, "no harm shall come to him that I can avert; and, I am not the weakest of women."

Oh, the perversity of women. Who can comprehend it? Who analyze the mysterious creatures?

When there was against Clifford Heath only a breath of suspicion, a few whispered words from his own lips, that might mean nothing of importance, when calmly reconsidered, a missing letter, with the contents of which he was familiar, and which, therefore, could be of little value to him, and it was enough. He stood before her accused, and went out from her presence wronged, insulted, splendid as King Arthur in his helpless indignation.

Now the detective's strong chain of evidence, John Burrill's strange insinuations, and still stranger conduct, his words when he spoke, his reticence when he kept silent, all were arrayed against him, with telling effect, and in spite of them all, Constance Wardour angrily assured herself, and fully believed, that Clifford Heath was a wronged, and innocent man. She did not reason herself into this belief; and it was absurd, of course. She arrived at her conclusions, as all loving women do, through her feelings, and her instinct. A woman seldom reasons, but in many cases her ready intuition is worth more than all man's wisdom. Her delicate instinct strikes directly at the truth, when man's reason gropes in the darkness.

Constance went out very little during these troubled days, and for this there were several reasons. John Burrill's obtrusiveness was at its height, and he fairly haunted the vicinity of Wardour; and since the advent of Mr. Belknap, Constance had an uneasy feeling that she was in some way, under surveillance. Nelly, who was argus-eyed, and always in armor on behalf of her mistress, had, on one or two occasions, spied a lurker about the premises; and Constance was resolved to give Mr. Belknap as little trouble, on her account, as possible. She had not visited Sybil for some days, for, although she had informed the detective that she desired to consult Mr. Lamotte, she had no such intentions; and, since the day when she had promised Mr. Lamotte to retain the detective for another week, she had avoided meeting him, and being forced to resume the conversation.

To know herself under the watchful eye of one detective, while anxiously expecting the advent of another, and to be aware that the presence of the one must not be made known to the other, afforded her a new and strange sensation; not altogether an unpleasant one either, for Constance was no coward, and had a decided taste for adventure.

She realized, too, the absurdity of being thus shadowed, in her own house, by her own hired agent.

"I should go down to posterity as the first woman who ever hired a spy to watch herself," she mused with a little laugh. "I begin to think that I am an absurd creature, throughout."

Two days passed, and Constance endured them, although the hours crept slowly. On the third, her anxiety was almost beyond control.

If Bathurst should fail her! If her letter had not found him! If he were absent from the city! Oh, what a chance was there for disaster. Mr. Belknap would soon be in the field, and Ray's time had almost expired.

"Oh," she said, anxiously, "if he disappoints me, what shall I do. I must trust Ray, and will be strong enough to battle with this danger?"

While she mused thus, growing wild with anxiety, a half-grown boy, bearing on his head a small tray of delicate ivory carvings, was applying for admittance at the servants' entrance. He was shabbily dressed, but possessed a fine, intelligent face, and bore himself with cool confidence.

"I have brought the carving for Miss Wardour," he said, briskly. "Can I see her, please?"

Nelly hesitated. "She expects me," said the boy, quickly; "and, as I am a little late, I would like to show her the wares and be off, for I've more to sell in the village. Just tell her it's the chap she's looking for."

Constance stared in surprise when Nelly delivered this message.

"The chap I am looking for," she repeated slowly; then, with a sudden brightening of her whole face, she added: "Oh, to be sure! I had almost forgotten. Send him here, at once, Nelly."

"I hope you will excuse me," began the boy, apologetically; then, as Nelly closed the door, he dropped his voice, and said, "I come from Mr. Bathurst," and,

taking off his cap, he produced from thence a letter, which he put in her hand.

"I'm to wait for the answer," he said, and took up his position beside his wares. Constance opened the letter, with a hand trembling with eagerness. It ran:

"Miss Wardour—By all means keep the secret of the diamonds, and trust all to me. I think it best not to come to you, as Belknap keeps a constant watch upon your movements; dismiss him as soon as you like. Have no fears regarding Heath, I have his enemies well roped; be assured that I shall be on hand when needed, and when you see me expect to have the question of the diamond robbery forever set at rest. If you have anything to say, send verbal instructions by boy; he is to be trusted. Yours sincerely,

NEIL J. BATHURST."

Constance heaved a sigh of relief, as she finished the perusal of this note, and after a moment's reflection, she said:

"Tell Mr. Bathurst, that I will obey his instructions, and that Mr. Belknap will be dismissed from my service to-day."

"Yes, madam. Now if you will please to select some of these things for the sake of appearance."

"Of course. You are very thoughtful. Are you a young detective too?"

The boy looked up with a gleam of pride in his eyes.

"I have been in Mr. Bathurst's service two years, madam."

"Oh, then I have no fears as to your discretion; so I will ask you a question, knowing that you are wise enough to refuse me an answer if I am asking too much."

The boy smiled, and stood attentive.

"May I ask if Mr. Bathurst is really now in W—, and when he arrived?"

The boy laughed an odd laugh, and full of mischief.

"Mr. Bathurst is here," he said. "I can't tell just when he did arrive."

"Then you did not come together?"

"We! Oh, no, indeed!" laughing again. "Mr. Bathurst is too smart for that."

Constance smiled with a returning feeling of ease and restfulness.

"Ah, I see I can trust Mr. Bathurst—and you, and lest I ask the wrong question if I continue. I will not ask another one; tell Mr. Bathurst, I rely on him to straighten all the tangles; and that I like his messenger almost as much as his message."

"My but ain't she a rum young lady," mused the boy, as he trudged away from Wardour Place with his lightened tray of ivories, "and handsome! jingo! if I was Mr. Bathurst I'd work for her, just to see her smile, and no pay; but Lord, he don't care, he don't; he'll work just as hard for any old crone; he's another rum one."

"Ah, what a relief," breathed Constance, reading for the third time Bathurst's reassuring note. "I begin to feel like myself once more. Now I am ready for you, Mr. private detective Belknap."

And, truly, Constance was herself once more. Poor Mrs. Allston, sitting aloof, and abandoned during the days of her niece's perturbation of mind, was the first to receive the benefit of the returning sunshine. Constance, for reasons which any woman can guess, had kept her anxiety, concerning Doctor Heath, a profound secret from this good lady; and she, watching the signs of the times, made no comments, but speculated profoundly—and, wide of the mark.

"You should have gone with me to drive, yesterday, Con," said Mrs. Allston to Constance, who was sitting in her aunt's room, half an hour after the departure of her small messenger, was endeavoring to atone for her neglect of the past few days by chatting cheerily upon every subject but the one which was of deepest interest to herself.

"You should have been with me and seen Sybil Lamotte."

"Sybil! Did you call there?"

"Oh, no. I can't get on with Mrs. Lamotte well enough to brave such a call alone; she is too stately and non-committal for me."

"You don't understand her, auntie; but Sybil, did you speak with her?"

"Yes, we met just over the bridge, and Sybil stopped the carriage to ask after you; I think she is anxious to see you."

"Poor Sybil," said Constance, contritely. "I have neglected her of late; but we will drive there to-morrow; to-day I don't feel just like going out. Does Sybil look well, auntie?"

Mrs. Allston leaned forward and lifted a plump forefinger to give emphasis to her words.

"Con, Sybil is dying or going mad, I can't tell which."

"Auntie, why?"

But Mrs. Allston went on rapidly. "I never saw such a change; two weeks ago, one week ago, even the last time she came here, Sybil seemed nerved to bear her trouble, she carried herself well and seemed firm as a rock."

"Outwardly, of course, one couldn't feel much secret pride, compelled to live under the same roof with that low man, she has married; but Sybil is not calm outwardly now, she has lost all that brilliant color."

"So much the better, it was the outward token of a mental excitement that would soon drive her mad; Sybil should never have attempted to brave criticism, and bear her shame so publicly. Every time she has allowed that man to appear beside her in the streets of W—, has shortened her life as surely as slow poison could do it."

"Well, mark my word, she won't undergo the ordeal much longer; her eyes have lost their steady light and luster, and have a wild, frightened, expectant look impossible to describe; when a horse came suddenly up behind us, she started and almost screamed with fright, and I could see her hands tremble and her lips quiver for minutes after; hands, they are mere claws! and she is growing more shadowy every day."

"Auntie, hush! you have made me as nervous as you picture Sybil. I shall not rest until I see her."

"There is a gentleman to see you, Miss Constance, said Nelly, from the doorway, which position she had gained unnoticed by the two ladies.

Constance gave a nervous start, and then arose hastily.

"Who is it, Nelly?" she asked, merely for appearance sake, for she fully expected to see Mr. Belknap.

"He didn't give his name, Miss, but said he come by appointment. It's the same gentleman as called a few days ago."

"Oh! then he won't detain me long," said the young lady, a resolute look coming into her eyes. "Auntie, I'll be with you again in a very few moments."

"He won't be very graciously received," was Mrs. Allston's mental comment. "I know that gleam of the eye, and what it means."

But Mrs. Allston was mistaken for once.

"Oh, Mr. Belknap," Constance said, sweeping into his presence with her proudest air, and smiling upon him her sweetest smile. "I am glad you have come."

"Promptness is our first lesson in my profession," replied he, with an affable smile.

"Yes! and have you learned anything new since Monday?"

"Nothing of importance. The party under suspicion has been entertaining a friend, and has been out very little."

"Oh!"

"One thing occurred on Monday last, not long after I had left you, which I can't help looking on with suspicion."

"Indeed! and may I hear it?"

"I think so. Without stopping to explain my modes of taking observations, I will give the bare fact. On Monday afternoon, while Doctor Heath was alone in his office, a boy, carrying on his head a tray of carvings, stopped at the foot of the stairs, set down his tray, ran up the flight like a young cat, and just as quietly, and slipped a note underneath the office door."

"Really!" in real surprise, and some disturbance of mind. "And you know nothing more about the note?"

"Nothing; but I shall soon I trust."

"Then you intend following up this case, Mr. Belknap?"

He looked up with a start of astonishment.

"Is not that your intention?"

"Decidedly not."

"But—have you consulted with Mr. Lamotte?"

"I have consulted with no one, sir. I thought over the matter once more, and decided to let my own mind guide my actions."

"But Mr. Lamotte thinks the case should be pushed."

"Mr. Lamotte is my neighbor, not my guardian. He is good enough to advise me sometimes; I think he would scarcely presume to dictate."

"Ah! then I am to consider myself no longer in your service?"

She bowed her head.

"After I have cancelled my indebtedness to you," she said, serenely.

With a look of vexation that he could not hide, the private detective drew from his pocket a memorandum book, and from thence a slip of paper, which he handed to Constance.

"This is my statement," he said. She ran her eye over the itemized account, smiling a little as she did so. Then, rising swiftly, she said:

"Excuse me for one moment."

He bowed silently, and she went out, returning soon with a bank cheque, which she placed in his hands, saying:

"So ends the case of the Wardour diamonds. I shall not take it up again."

"What do you really mean that?"

"I really do."

The detective opened his lips, as if about to remonstrate, then closed them suddenly, and moved toward the door.

"Do you still cling to your intention of notifying the town authorities, and setting them upon Doctor Heath?" she asked.

He turned toward her, with a peculiar smile upon his face. "You have offered a reward for your jewels, I believe?"

"You mistake, I have offered a reward for the apprehension of the thief or thieves."

"And—as you have withdrawn the case, shall you withdraw your reward also?"

"By no means."

"Then—if I bring you both the jewels and the thieves my reward should be doubled?"

A queer gleam shot from her eyes, as she answered, without hesitation:

"And so I shall. Place my robbers in the county jail, and put my diamonds in my hands, and you shall receive a double reward."

"Then, for the present, I shall keep my claws in my own hands; Miss Wardour, I wish you good morning." And the private detective stalked from the room with the air of a man who was overflowing with desirable information.

"That's a queer woman," mused Mr. Belknap, as he turned his face away from Wardour. "I can't make her out. If it were not altogether too fishy, I should say she had a suspicion concerning those diamonds. I intend to look a little closer into the doings of Miss Wardour; and, blow hot, or blow cold, I'm bound to have my reward, if not by this, why by that."

With this enigmatical reflection, he looked up to behold, sitting by the roadside, a tramp of sinister aspect, who turned his head indolently as the detective approached, and then applied himself closer to a luncheon of broken victuals, eating like a man famished.

Mr. Belknap, who, on this occasion, had visited Wardour on foot, came quite close upon the man, and then halted suddenly, putting his hand in his pocket, as if with charitable intent; instantly the tramp dropped his fragment of bread, and sprang to his feet, with outstretched hands, as if greedy for the expected bounty. He was a dirty, ragged fellow, undersized, but strong and sinewy, with an ugly scarred face, and a boorish gait and manner. As the private detective withdrew his hand from his pocket and tendered the tramp a small coin, a passer-by, had there been such, would have called the scene a tableau of alms-giving; but what the detective said was:

"Well, Roake, here you are; are you ready for business?"

And the tramp replied: "You bet, if it's a solid racket."

"Then follow me, at a distance, until we reach a place where we can talk things over." And Mr. Belknap moved on, never once glancing back.

The tramp once more seated himself beside the fence, and resumed his occupation. When the last scrap of the food was devoured, he arose, and, taking up a rough stick that served as a cane, he followed the receding form of the private detective.

At sunset, Ray Vandeyck presented himself punctually for further instructions, at Wardour.

"You are released, Ray," said Constance, coming to meet him, with a bright face and a warm hand-clasp. "You are free to follow your own devices; Doctor Heath has a better guardian than either you or I."

"Cool, upon my word," said Ray, with a grimace. "So I am discharged without references?"

"Even so, and you must be content without an explanation, too, for the present. My tongue is still tied."

"Worse and worse, Conny; can't I even know who has supplanted me?"

"It's a great secret, and must be carefully guarded, but, I believe I will confide that much to you, as it does not conflict with any promises."

"Well! I listen."

"Doctor Heath is protected by an able detective. His name I must not communicate."

Ray Vandeyck opened wide his handsome eyes, and gave vent to a long, low whistle.

"Conny, you are too deep for me," he said; "I am all at sea; I will drop the subject, as it is working severely upon my curiosity."

For a few moments they sat in silence, Constance thinking how much she regretted not asking Mr. Bathurst to make himself known to this loyal friend, who must now be kept in ignorance, however worthy he might be of all confidence, and Ray thinking of something that caused his face to sadden, and his eyes to darken with inward pain.

Presently he drew a little nearer his hostess, and asked, in a low, sorrowful tone:

"Conny, have you seen her lately?"

"Not for a week or more, Ray."

"I saw her yesterday."

"And she," anxiously; "did she see you, Ray?"

"No, thank God! she was driving with her mother, and Con," his voice broke and he turned his face away; "I wish you would go to her."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Ever Faithful.

Ten years of unhappy married life, two years of separation, and then, when death seemed inevitable, a happy reunion. Such was the experience of Thomas Riordan.

Riordan was stabbed three times in the hallway of a lodging house, 409 Dupont street, between 5 and 6 on the morning of October 17. Two of the knife thrusts entered the abdomen and one entered the fleshy part of his left arm. There was no hope given for his recovery, and it was thought only a matter of hours before he would pass away.

His wife, who had been separated from him for several years, and who was then residing in Sacramento, read the account of the stabbing affair in the Call, and hastened to this city to nurse him back to life or to console his dying hours.

All the troubles were forgotten, all she thought of was that her husband was dying, and it was her place by his bedside.

Riordan was sleeping when his wife entered the ward, and it was not until he awoke and found her by his bedside that he knew all the past was forgiven. Since that time she has attended him by night and day, determined that since fate had thrown them together again nothing but death should separate them.

For several days he hovered between life and death, and often Mrs. Riordan passed nights expecting her husband to draw his last breath, but at last the sick man showed signs of recovery, he improved rapidly, and in a few days he will be discharged from the hospital.—San Francisco Call.

Supplying All Wants.

The Peddler—I have the most excellent silver polish.

The Lady of the House—Don't need it. I haven't got any silver.

"Well, then, it will take grease-spots out of wall-paper."

"Haven't got any wall-paper."

"Then it will renew the curl in feathers."

"Haven't got any feathers."

"Well, then, it will make oil-paintings look like new."

"Haven't got any oil-paintings."

"Well, then, a little taken internally will make you feel as if you had some of these things.—Good day."—From Answers.

A Dog on Two Legs.

A correspondent of Nature tells a remarkable story of a dog, which having through an accident lost both legs on the right-hand side, has learned to walk and to run on its two remaining legs. Enough remains of the right foreleg to serve as an occasional prop, but when running the dog touches the ground only with the two left legs. With these it hops rapidly along, and, having been a trained sheep dog before the accident, it manages to herd its flock as it did when it had all its legs.

The Language of the Period.

There was a story that when Lord Uxbridge's leg was broken by a shot he was carried to the rear, and passed the Duke of Wellington, to whom he said, in the language of the period, "Lost my leg, by G—!" To which the Duke replied, "Have you, by G—!" and that these were the only words which passed between the two heroes during the battle—Cornhill Magazine.

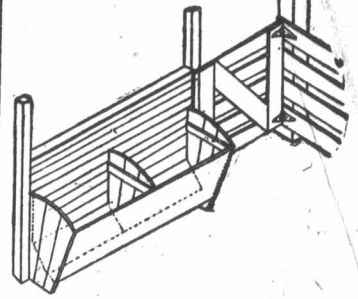
Their Ultimate Effect is Good.

The friendly services of the bacteria outweigh the injuries they inflict upon us.

## FEED BOXES

One Stationary, the Other Tilting, for Feeding and Emptying and Cleaning.

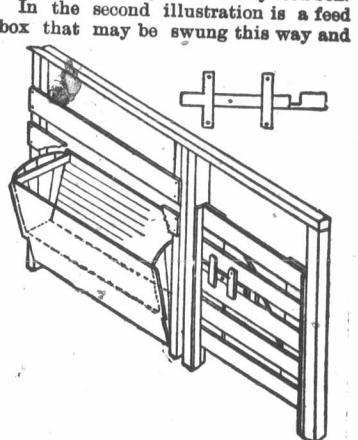
The North Carolina experiment station is at Raleigh. Bulletin No. 143 from this station gives information of



STATIONARY FEED BOX.

much value on the subject of building a cheap barn, as well as some other things.

One of the useful chapters of information in bulletin No. 143 is on the subject of constructing feed boxes. Illustrative diagrams are printed. The first one herewith given shows how to make easily and cheaply a stationary feed box. In the second illustration is a feed box that may be swung this way and



TILTING FEED BOX.

that and turned quite over to be emptied or cleaned. It is easy to understand the construction of the box from the diagram in bulletin No. 143.

## Raise the Right Kind of Horse.

Do not do as many did when all horses were a fair price and street cars used up plugs. Then one who had a mare that could travel a little bred at once to the first fast horse, regardless of color, form or breeding, intending to raise a "fier." Mares showing some draft were bred to draft stallions. Seeing draft horses were selling for good prices, some bred small, light mares to draft horses, and finding that heavy animals could not stand excessive heat bred their half draft mares back to light horses, thus producing plugs and scrubs. The owners of these are mostly the ones who complain of horses being low.

If a saddle, roadster or draft horse is wanted, one of merit and worth buying, it is found that good horses are not so low after all. These are the kind farmers should raise, and if really good ones they will not have to sell at a sacrifice. It is not needful that they limit their horses to one kind, but one or more colts of both carriage and draft breeding could be raised each year, and if size and style are obtained there is always a buyer ready to pay a good price for a team better than his rival owns.—R. A. Hayne in Southern Stock Farm.

## Live Stock Points.

There seems to be a good deal of nonsense in the world still in spite of printers' ink—maybe, indeed, because of it. One proof is the promulgation of the theory that if a dairy bull gets over-fat his offspring will be of the beefy type. If a sire of race horse blood were too fat at the time of breeding, would his colts be Shires or Clydesdales? Any sire that is too fat will lack vigor and transmit less of it to his descendants, whether he be a pig, horse, sheep or bull. That much truth there is in the doctrine; no more.

See that your house and stable drains do not run into or near the wells from which either your family or your live stock drink. Farmers are often criminally negligent in this respect, and both themselves and their animals drink disease and death year after year. Then, when one of the family dies of typhoid fever or consumption or the best cow goes off with tuberculosis, the farmer wails out that it is a "mysterious visitation of Providence." It is a visitation of filth pure and simple, and not at all mysterious.

Never preserve for stock purposes lambs bred from a sire only a year old. Breeding from lambs and their progeny produces soon a flock of weakly, undersized sheep.

Tuberculosis and many other diseases of animals may often be traced to want of cleanliness and ventilation in stables. Each full grown animal in a stable ought to have 1,000 feet of air space, the entire air of the stable being changed twice a day.

When you build a new barn or stable, study the most approved plans and make ample provision for ventilation. The architects of rural buildings today know how to provide this without chilling the animals.