



CHAPTER XVI.

Everything was dark and strange to Paul Lowther, coming in as he did from the glaring tropic sunshine, but he rushed forward excitedly at Aube's cry, and timidly made out a figure in white, whose hands were eagerly stretched out to him, and, obeying the natural instinct of the moment, he clasped that figure in his arms.

"Aube, my darling!" he cried.

She shrank from Paul's embrace trembling and confused, as Nousie looked wildly on, and a loud, angry ejaculation came from Saintone, which made Paul turn upon him, seeing more distinctly now.

But this glances at the stranger was only momentary, and he turned again to Aube, looking wonderingly at Nousie, then at the place, and back at Aube, whose hand he still retained.

"I could hardly find you," he said. "I have only just landed from the packet."

"Mr. Lowther!" faltered Aube, as she gazed at him wildly. "Why are you here?"

"Can you ask that?" he said. Then, with his eyes wandering once more about the place, "but my dearest girl, why are you here? This gentleman—will you introduce me?"

As the words left his lips Saintone could contain himself no longer. Half-maddened before Aube's firm refusal, the sight of this stranger who had been so warmly welcomed roused him to a pitch of fury, and he raged forth:

"Aube! Who is this man?"

"My friend, Mr. Paul Lowther, sir," said a sharp voice from one who had come forward unheeded, "and my name is Durham—Englishman—at your service. Who are you?"

Saintone glared at the speaker in astonishment, but turned back directly to Paul, who changed color, as he said:

"I beg pardon if I have come unmercifully, but I thought this was a cabaret. Mademoiselle Dulau, in heaven's name, why do I find you in a place like this?"

Aube's lips parted, but her emotion checked her utterance, and she crept to Nousie's side, catching at her arm for support.

"Oh, I beg pardon," cried Paul, hastily, as he struggled with the undefined apprehension, which attacked him. "You live somewhere near. You will take me to Madame Dulau." He bowed slightly to Nousie, whose eyes were fixed upon him angrily. "And this lady," he said, "is—"

There was a pause, during which Aube's lips struggled for utterance, and Nousie stood motionless and listening as a prisoner awaits the death sentence from the judge.

It was from no shrinking at her task, for Aube's heart beat loudly and warmly then. She had chosen her path, and, martyr-like, she was prepared to pace it to the end, but no words would come.

She glanced at Nousie, and saw that she was white and trembling. She could see Paul's color coming and going, but the agitation of neither broke the spell which bound her, and her eyes wandered to Saintone, who was gazing at her fixedly, with a sneering laugh faintly appearing about his lips.

That aroused her just as Paul said again rather sternly:

"Is it your servant? Am I wrong in asking what I did?"

"No," said Aube, simply, as she passed her arm round Nousie's waist. "Mr. Lowther, this is my dear mother, Madame Dulau. Mamma," she continued, quietly, "this is Mr. Paul Lowther; dear Lucia's brother; and his friend."

She held out her hand to Bart, who drew a long breath after watching her keenly.

"You brave little darling," he said to himself, as he took her hands, and then aloud, "I bring you dear Lucia's love. My dear Miss Dulau, I am glad to see you again. Madame Dulau, I am afraid we have taken you by surprise."

He held out his hand now to Nousie, who drew a long breath, and caught it eagerly, and held it for a few moments, smiling pleasantly in a face whose frank honesty impressed her.

"Yes," she said, quietly; "it is a great surprise to us both. Lucia's brother and his friend. You are very welcome to my poor home."

Paul seemed dumfounded, but at last, evidently suffering painfully, he held out his hand to Nousie, conscious that her mask of calmness, Aube was suffering agony, and watching her, wondering what she would say or do.

Nousie's brow wrinkled and her face puckered a little with a deprecating smile, but she looked at the extended hand, but she did not take it. It was not from malice, but Paul's words had cut deeply, and she could not help saying with a slight shrug of her shoulders:

"You wish to shake hands with me?"

"Yes," stammered Paul. "With Aube's mother. I beg your pardon. I did not know."

"No," she said, simply; "how could you? I am not a lady. Only the keeper of this place?"

She laid her hand in his for a moment, and as his own was once more free, Paul looked confusedly from one to the other.

His eyes lit last upon Saintone, who stood watching them savagely, and as the young men's gaze encountered, Paul's confusion passed away, for instinctively he knew that he was face to face with a rival.

"Will you come in, gentlemen?" said Nousie, quietly. "Mademoiselle Lucia's friends are very welcome here. Aube, dear, show the way. Monsieur Saintone," she continued, "I will not ask you to join us, after what has passed."

"I understand," said Saintone, speaking to Nousie, but with his eyes fixed on Paul in an insolent-looking stare. "I'm going now, Nousie, but I shall come again."

He nodded at Aube, who looked at him calmly, and walked toward the door, but "I'll be back directly."

"Ah," he said, "I really forgot. Did I have anything to drink?"

As he spoke he threw a coin on the front of the buffet.

"No, Monsieur Saintone," said Nousie, calmly, and she took up and held out the piece.

"Keep it," he said, contemptuously, and the blood flushed in Aube's cheeks at his manner toward her mother. Then in a whisper Saintone continued: "Send those men away while their lives are safe."

Nousie looked up at him sharply, and he returned the look as if these were a

peculiar and well understood import to all this.

"I am one of you now," he continued in the same tone, "and I am not going to be cast aside like this."

CHAPTER XVII.

Back in the evening, through the dark shadows of the great leaves, where great moths flitted over the cloving scented blossoms, and the fireflies scintillated among the bushes as if there had been a shower of tiny stars.

Just then the rustling sound was repeated, and it struck him that it was like a hand grasping and shaking a stem of the tree trained all over the house.

The sound ceased again, but he lay listening to it to be quite startled, for the noise came again accompanied by a faint breathing, and, as he lay on his side watching the window, something darker than the darkness appeared in the opening, and he knew that a hand and arm had been passed in to grasp the window sill. The noise which followed was undoubtedly caused by a foot seeking for a resting place, and as this rustling ceased, some hand and arm were slowly eclipsed a star of the horizon, and he dimly made out the contour of a head.

Paul's hand stole beneath his pillow, where he had intended to place his revolver, but he remembered now that with his thoughts on Aube, he had forgotten it, and it lay on the table.

Without a moment's hesitation he sprang out of bed, seized it, making directly after for the window, but on reaching it all was perfectly still below; and though he peered out into the garden, and tried to distinguish the paths and shrubs, all was black there; and at last contenting himself with closing the window, was about to return to his couch when Bart spoke.

"What's the matter?" he said.

Paul told him.

"Shouldn't wonder, old man," said Bart. "We dropped into a nice place; but we can prove it as soon as it's light."

It was nearly morning when Paul fell asleep, and not much after sunrise when he started into wakefulness, to find the window open and Bart peering out.

"Halloo! Awake?" said the latter. "Say, you were right. Someone climbed up here last night. The creeper's torn just below, and there are the marks of two wide-toed feet on the soft earth."

"What do you think it means?"

"Don't know. Pilfering, perhaps. I hope it does not mean the knife. Say, old chap, I'd have practiced for this at a pistol gallery if I had known."

(To be continued.)

GOOD MRS. ROCKEFELLER.

A Charitable Woman Who Loves to Help the Poor.

Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, wife of the millionaire, is said to be at all times a woman of very charitable inclinations.

Her daughter Edith's intended marriage to Harold McCormick, son of the reaper man, is the talk of the social world across the entire continent. And partly to consecrate the event and partly from thankfulness that her favorite daughter has found so true a heart in return for her own, this good woman has been devoting half of each day to helping those who have no such cause to be happy.

"But look here—"

"I do, old fellow. I'm insured heavily in a good office with leave to travel, and the officials were so kind and friendly that I wouldn't for the world behave badly to them."

"So had you," said Bart.

"But if that man goes to the house I shall shoot him."

"Mind he don't have the first pop at you, old man. Recollect that the nigger is lord paramount here; be ruled by me, and don't do anything rash. If you get showing fight our lives will not be worth an hour's purchase."

"But look here—"

"I do, old fellow. I'm insured heavily in a good office with leave to travel, and the officials were so kind and friendly that I wouldn't for the world behave badly to them."

"What do you mean?"

"Get killed and have my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns come upon them so soon."

"Now, my dear Bart, is this a time for your beggarly attempt at wit?"

"Best I've got in stock, old fellow. But come, be reasonable. It's hard, I know, to find that the lady we had stamped a lady is not a lady after all. But she's a precious, nice, sweet woman, wonderfully proud of her child, and that black Cherub worships her, and so do the niggers all about."

"How do you know?"

"Tell me. There, let's have a cigar and a quiet think. You are, of course, upset by all this, and not in a position to judge calmly. To-morrow we shall see in a very different light."

As Bart spoke he glanced behind him once or twice, trying to pierce the darkness.

"I suppose you are right," said Paul, sighing; "but I shall never rest till I have her away from that wretched place."

Bart paused, took out his cigar case, and offered it to Paul.

"No, thanks. I can't smoke."

"Yes; take one," said Bart, in a low voice; "and as we are lighting up give a good look around without moving or seeming to notice anything."

"What do you mean?" said Paul, taking a cigar.

"We shall have to try the native weeds," said Bart; "those are nearly the last. Ready for a light? Now, then."

He struck a match and held it up to his friend's cigar; and then struck another to his own.

"Fancy—being followed—heard a rustle at the side," he said, in the intervals of puffing. "Be cool. Are you alright?"

"Yes."

"Then come along."

"See anything?" he continued, after a few moments.

"I thought I saw the gleam of something bright."

There is a rumor that on the day of her daughter's marriage Mrs. Rockefeller will give away four tidy trousseau to the daughters of Hudson river farmers. She will certainly feign them, for the invitations have been sent out, and it will be no wonder, so greatly do the Rockefellers desire to please their humbler neighbors, if the popular young bride and handsome bridegroom dance upon the green with the farmer lads and lasses, as the tenantry of England dance upon their landed estates.

Change in English Sentiment.

The meeting of the Catholic Truth Society in London, which aims to spread Catholicity over Great Britain, was a notable gathering last week. Many eminent churchmen were in attendance.

The congress concluded on Thursday, with a pilgrimage to Glastonbury Abbey, the oldest shrine in England.

Thousands of pilgrims, including 100

robed clergy, traveled by train from Bristol to Glastonbury. It was not very long ago that popular sentiment would not have allowed such a pilgrimage.

On Thursday a large crowd watched with the greatest sympathetic interest the long, banner-waving procession, composed of Catholic guilds, Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, Benedictines, and Carmelites, alternately singing and reciting prayers. The scene was an impressive and picturesque one, and marked an immense change in the position of the Roman Catholic Church in England.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

In round numbers the United States has produced \$2,000,000,000 of gold since the discovery of the precious metal in California.

Official reports show that drunkenness in the army was a good deal less prevalent last year than ever before. But as even now 31 per cent. of the admissions to army hospitals are for alcoholism, there is evidently plenty of room for more improvement.

The ex-Empress Eugenie has made her will, and he began thinking of their walk back to the town, past houses, dotted here and there among unbragable foliage, which offered plenty of concealment for any one who chose to dog their steps. And it was not fancy, he knew, for he was convinced that the glance he had seen when the match was struck was from a man's eye. Bart had seen a face, and it was evident that they had been followed. But for what?

He had just reached this point in his musings when he held his breath, for there was a faint rustling sound beneath the window.

It ceased directly, and Paul breathed freely again, attributing the sound to some nocturnal animal—a rat perhaps.

Then he thought of the position of the house where they were staying—a large two-story building nearly covered with luxuriant creepers that would form a harbor for wild creatures such as were probably abundant there.

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