THE EVENING NEWS.

Tuesday, - - - - February 7, 1871.

[From Chambers' Journal.]

LADY LESINGHAM'S DIAMONDS.

[CONCLUDED.]

His grandmother lived in her own villa near Florence, old and rich, widowed and childless, for her daughter, Lady Pemberton, was gone, long ago, and she had quarreled with all the Pemberton family—I think on the subject of dowry. She had quarreled with all her own relations, too, one after another. But the *contessa*, as the Italians called her, had a page named Cosmo Bachini (some said a near relative), and rather hair-brained. He had run away a dozen times—had sung in the theatres, and got into scrapes, and been brought back; but he stood so high in the *contessa's* favor and confidence, perhaps as the only creature cared for, that no jewel-drawer or casket was locked from him; and having nothing to do, and money at command, he dressed like a signor, lounged in the piazzas, and appeared in all public places. He was but a youth, and his evil stars sent him to fall in love with my poor Clara. She was always a pretty woman, though I have neglected her; and maybe she encouraged the boy for her own amusement, as women will. At any rate, he was so far led on as to bring her a set of diamonds, heirlooms in the Capella family, which the old contessa kept strictly treasured up, but had not worn for twenty years. At first, I believe, it was only as a loan, to astonish the natives with at a great ball, and make an impression on my mother's mind, for she was not favorably disposed to Miss Fenwick. But that same night the old contessa died suddenly. The diamonds dazzled my poor Clara's eyes. She had gained such glory by them, at the ball, and gained over my mother too (heaven forgive her own mother, for she must have connived at the business). In short, Clara kept the diamonds and kept the poor page in her leash till she married me; and Cosmo was carried to the lunatic asylum a week after.

"I knew nothing of all this at the time we came home to England. Years passed, and Clara wore the diamonds, as if they had been her own inheritance. We heard that Sir George Pemberton had been advertising and inquiring far and near for certain jewels which his grandfather had bequeathed to him with other family property, to return, after his death to the Capellas; but that was all that came to my knowledge, till Lady Tunbridge came back from a winter's sojourn in Florence. She had resided in the Contessa's villa, which Sir George had thought proper to let, and found in the drawer of an old neglected cabinet, part of the correspondence between Clara and the unlucky page, in which the story of the diamonds was made plainly manifest. The evidence of those letters would have been sufficient to place lady Lesingham in a convict's cell; their discovery would have been the triumph of Sir George's hatred; and it was the triumph of Lady Tunbridge too, for Clara had been her successful rival; but her mode of enjoying the victory was peculiar. I think the inventor of all evil must have personally prompted the woman when she contrived to make my poor wife sit to receive her visit in those diamonds every Friday, because on that day she had appeared in them and eclipsed her at the ball; and with those condemning letters in her hands, and Sir George Pemberton in the background, Lady Tunbridge had to get her terms. She has stuck to them ever since. My poor wife's mind has failed under the long and miserable bondage; I have got disgusted with my bargain, and gone the whole length of the road to ruin. However, the fates have done us one good turn at last; Sir George Pemberton was shot in a duel on the Roman frontier on Friday week; it was a Frenchman that did it; and if my blessing were worth anything, he and his whole nation should get it for the fact. The heir-at-law to the old Contessa's leavings is Cardinal Capella, her far-away cousin, and as good a man as ever wore red stockings. When I heard of the transaction, I went to his Eminence, and in a manner confessed about the diamonds. Roman Cardinal as he is, he spoke to me more wisely and kindly than ever did a parson of my own English Church, gave me a solemn pledge that nothing should ever be made public regarding the long and vainly-sought jewels, and sent me to England with his own chaplain to get them restored with strict secrecy to the lawful heir, and thus put an end to the horrid visits of Lady Tunbridge.

"It was strange that poor Cosmo, after being discharged as cured from the lunatic asylum, should have found his way to England, and got into this house in a relapse of insanity, at the very moment when Martha came to tell me that all the servants were out of the way (an outlawed man cannot trust his mother's domestics,) and that he should have fallen on the Countess in her hour of triumph, and half avenged our years of bondage. The good chaplain knew the page in his better days, and will take him back to his native country and, I suppose, his old quarters. For myself, I must go as quickly as I can get out of England, and back to the Cardinal with these dreadful diamonds. Now, you know all, Miss Fenton. Be kind to my poor wife, as you have been; and if better days should ever come to me, I will not forget it. Farewell. God bless you, and send you many a happier Christmas than this is like to be!" He shook my hand warmly; and before I could find words to reply, he had stepped into the bedroom, took one last look at Lady Lesingham where she lay, between stupor and sleep, spoke some words to Martha, and hurried down stairs.

In a few minutes more we were alone again in the great house, with all the doors securely barred, and watching together by Lady Lesingham's bed.

"I would fetch the family doctor but for that black mark around her neck," said Martha. "I hope it will show less in the morning; she sleeps quietly now."

We sat there; and the poor lady slept till the Christmas chimes began to ring out over London; then she woke up, and asked with such a simple, child-like look for whose wedding it was that all the bells were ringing! "Christmas!" said she, when we told her; "is it come again? I remember Christmas parties long ago in Calcutta, and the midnight mass we heard in the cathedral of Florence, where I first saw Sydney. Do you know I dreamed that he came here to-night, and told me that Lady Tunbridge would never come here again!" and with a sigh of relief, she lay down her head and fell asleep once more. We thought her reason was entirely gone, and watched till the morning; but Lady Lesingham rose late in the next day, much the same that I had ever seen her, except that her neck was more carefully covered. However, the black mark wore away in time; and if any trace of its terrible occasion remained in Lady Lesingham's memory, she never recurred to it, nor showed any recollection of the whole diamond business, except that, for some few Fridays after, her Ladyship got rather fidgety towards the afternoon. That also wore away. The Dowager and her grand-daughters came back, and so did the servants. Soon after their return, Lord Lesingham made a public arrival at his mother's house, having first made an arrangement with his creditors. It was said that Cardinal Capella had befriended him in the transaction, but to what extent nobody could tell. However, his Lordship came back an altered man in the best sense, obtained possession of his family mansion, and took his poor lady to live with him there in retirement, but, I believe, in comfort, too. Before they set out for the country, I resigned my office of companion, because Cousin Frederick had got a legal appointment through the influence of the Lesingham connection, and was in a position to ask mamma. And Martha Mossrose said she was sure herself and her lady could do without me now. I understand that the discontented looking girls remained with their grandmother, and, by unparalleled exertions in London seasons and watering places, she got them married to aspiring men in the mercantile line. I also heard that Lady Tunbridge never completely recovered from the effects of a terrible accident which she met with—how, her fashionable friends could never make clearly out—on her way to a dancing party one Christmas eve. Half the doctors in London were consulted, and all the spas in Europe tried without avail; her Ladyship's health could not be restored, and her Ladyship's mind was equally out of order, for she was finally placed by her relatives under the care of a physician who kept an establishment for ladies of highly sensitive temperaments; and it is said that the disturbing topic of her days and nights was Lady Lesingham's diamonds.

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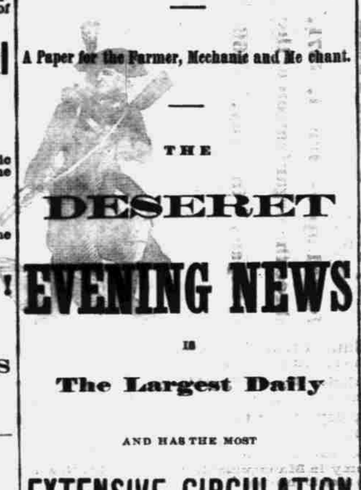

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