

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

By HONRE DE BALZAC

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Eugenie said nothing, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her generous instincts, so long repressed and dormant, had been suddenly awakened, and every kindly thought had been harshly checked as it had arisen. Outwardly this evening passed just as thousands of others had passed in their monotonous lives, but for the two women it was the most painful that they had ever spent. Eugenie sewed without raising her head; she took notice of the work box which Charles had looked at so scornfully yesterday evening. Mme. Grandet knitted away at her cuffs. Grandet sat twirling his thumbs, absorbed in schemes which should one day bring about results that would startle Saumur. Nanon was spinning; the whirr of her wheel was the only sound in the great room beneath the gray-painted rafters.

"Our tongues don't go very fast," she said, showing her large teeth, white as blanched diamonds.

"There is no call for them to go," answered Grandet, roused from his calculations.

He beheld a vision of the future—he saw eight millions in three years' time—he had set forth on a long voyage upon a golden sea.

"Let us go to bed. I will go up and wish my nephew a good night from you all, and see if he wants anything."

Mme. Grandet stayed on the landing outside her room door to hear what her worthy husband might say to Charles. Eugenie, bolder than her mother, went a step or two up the second flight.

"Well, nephew, you are feeling unhappy? Yes, cry, it is only natural, a father is a father. But we must bear our troubles patiently. What you have been crying I have been thinking for you; I am a kind uncle, you see. Come, don't lose heart. But you are all in the dark," Grandet went on. "That's bad—that's bad. One ought to see what one is doing. What a wax candle! Where have they fished that from? I believe the wench would pull up the floor of my house to cook eggs for that boy."

Mother and daughter, hearing these words, fled to their rooms and crept into their beds like frightened mice.

"Mme. Grandet, you have a lot of money somewhere, it seems," said the vine grower, walking into his wife's rooms.

"I am saying my prayers, dear," faltered the poor mother.

"Very well. Good night. To-morrow morning I shall have something to say to you."

CHAPTER IX.

Mme. Grandet betook herself to sleep like a schoolboy who has not learned his lessons and sees before him the angry face of the master when he wakes. Sheer terror led her to wrap the sheets about her head, but just at that moment she felt a kiss on her forehead. It was Eugenie, who had slipped into the room in the darkness and stood there barefooted in her nightdress.

"Oh, mother—my kind mother!" she said. "I shall tell him to-morrow morning that it was all my doing."

"No, don't. If you do, he will send you away to Noyers. Let me manage it. He will not eat me, after all."

"Oh, mamma, do you hear? He is crying still."

"Go back to bed, dear. The floor is damp; it will strike cold to your feet."

So ended the solemn day, which had brought for the poor wealthy heiress a lifelong burden of sorrow. Never again would Eugenie Grandet sleep as soundly or as lightly as heretofore.

The trouble and excitement of the day disturbed her rest; she woke again and again to listen for any sound from her cousin's room, thinking that she still heard the moans that all day long had vibrated through her heart. Sometimes she seemed to see him lying up there, dying of grief; sometimes she dreamed that he was being starved to death. Toward morning she distinctly heard a terrible cry. She dressed herself at once, and in the dim light of the dawn fled noiselessly up the stairs to her cousin's room. The door stood open, the wax candle had burned itself down to the socket. Nature had asserted herself; Charles, still dressed, was sleeping in the armchair, with his head fallen forward on the bed; he had been dreaming as furnished people dream. Eugenie admired the fair young face. It was flushed and tear-stained; the eyelids were swollen with weeping; he seemed to be still crying in his sleep, and Eugenie's own tears fell fast. Some dim feeling that his cousin was present awakened Charles; he opened his eyes and saw her distress.

"Pardon me, cousin," he said, dreamily. Evidently he had lost all reckoning of time, and did not know where he was.

"There are hearts here that feel for you, cousin, and we thought that you might perhaps want something. You should go to bed; you will tire yourself out if you sleep like that."

"Yes," he said, "that is true."

"Good-by," she said, and fled, half in confusion, half glad that she had come.

An hour later she went to her mother's room to help her to dress, as she always did. Then the two women went downstairs and waited for Grandet's coming in the anxiety which freezes or burns. The cooper came downstairs, spoke in an absent-minded way to his wife, kissed Eugenie, and sat down to table. He seemed to have forgotten last night's threats.

"What has become of my nephew? The child is not much in the way."

"He is asleep, sir," said Nanon.

"So much the better; he won't want a

wax candle for that," said Grandet, facetiously.

His extraordinary mildness and satirical humor puzzled Mme. Grandet; she looked earnestly at her husband. He took up his hat and gloves with the remark:

"I am going to have a look round in the market place; I want to meet the Cruchots."

Grandet always slept but little, and was wont to spend half the night in revolving and maturing schemes, a process by which his views, observations and plans gained amazingly in clearness and precision; indeed, this was the secret of that constant success which was the admiration of Saumur.

During the night this excellent man's ideas had taken an entirely new turn; hence his unusual mildness. He had been weaving a web to entangle them in Paris; he would envelop them in his toils, they should be as clay in his hands; they should hope and tremble, come and go, toil and sweat, and all for his amusement, all for the old cooper in the dingy room at the head of the worm-eaten staircase in the old house at Saumur; it tickled his sense of humor.

He had been thinking about his nephew. He wanted to save his dead brother's name from dishonor in a way that should not cost a penny either to his nephew or to himself. He was about to invest his money for three years, his mind was quite at leisure from his own affairs; he really needed some outlet for his malicious energy, and here was an opportunity supplied by his brother's failure. The claws were idle, he had nothing to squeeze between them, so he would pound the Parisians for Charles' benefit, and exhibit himself in the light of an excellent brother at a very cheap rate. As a matter of fact, the honor of the family name counted for very little with him in this matter; he looked at it from the purely impersonal point of view of the gambler, who likes to see a game well played although it is no affair of his. The Cruchots were necessary to him, but he did not mean to go in search of them; they should come to him. That very evening the comedy should begin, the main outlines were decided upon already, to-morrow he would be held up as an object of admiration all over the town, and his generosity should not cost him a farthing!

He returned in time for the midday meal, which he took standing. Then the keeper, who had not yet received his promised reward, appeared from Froidfont, bringing with him a hare, some partridges shot in the park, a few eels, and a couple of pike sent by him from the miller's.

"Aha! so here is old Cornouiller; you come just when you are wanted, like salt fish in Lent. Come, Nanon, look alive! Just take this, it will do for dinner to-day; the two Cruchots are coming."

Nanon opened her eyes with amazement, and stared first at one and then at another.

"Oh! indeed," she said; "and where are the herbs and the bacon to come from?"

"Wife," said Grandet, "let Nanon have six francs."

"Well, then, M. Grandet," the gamekeeper began (he wished to see the question of his salary properly settled, and was duly primed with a speech) "M. Grandet—"

"Tut, tut, tut," said Grandet, "I know what you are going to say; you are a good fellow, we will see about that to-morrow, I am very busy to-day. Give him five francs, wife," he added, and with that he beat a retreat. The poor woman was only too happy to purchase peace at the price of eleven francs. She knew by experience that Grandet usually kept quiet for a fortnight after he had made her disburse coin by coin the money which he had given her.

"There, Cornouiller," she said, as she slipped ten francs into his hand; "we will repay you for your services one of these days."

"Madame," said Nanon, who by this time had a basket on her arm, "three francs will be quite enough; keep the rest. I shall manage just as well with three."

"Let us have a good dinner, Nanon, my cousin is coming downstairs," said Eugenie.

"There is something very extraordinary going on, I am sure," said Mme. Grandet. "This makes the third time since we were married that your father has asked any one here to dinner."

It was nearly 4 o'clock in the afternoon; Eugenie and her mother had laid the cloth and set the table for six persons. Charles came into the dining room looking white and sad; there was a pathetic charm about his gestures, his face, his looks, the tones of his voice; his sorrow had given him the interesting look that women like so well, and Eugenie only loved him the more because his features were worn with pain. Perhaps, too, his trouble had brought them nearer in other ways. Charles was no longer the rich and handsome young man who lived in a sphere far beyond her ken; he was in deep and terrible distress, and sorrow is a great leveler.

Charles and Eugenie understood each other without a word being spoken on either side. The poor dandy of yesterday, fallen from his high estate, to-day was an orphan, who sat in a corner of the room, quiet, composed and proud, but from time to time he met his cousin's eyes, her kind and affectionate glance rested on him, and compelled him to shake off his dark and somber broodings, and to look forward with her to a future full of hope, in which she loved to think that she might share.

The news of Grandet's dinner party caused even greater excitement in Saumur than the sale of his vintage, although this latter proceeding had been a crime of the blackest dye, an act of high treason against the vine growers' interest.

It was not long before the des Grasin heard of Guillaume Grandet's violent end and impending bankruptcy. They determined to pay a visit to their client that evening, to console with him in his affliction, and to show a friendly interest; while they endeavored to discover the motives which could have led Grandet to invite the Cruchots to dinner at such a time.

Precisely at 5 o'clock President C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary arrived, dressed up to the nines this time. The guests seated themselves at table, and began by attacking their dinner with remarkably good appetites. Grandet was solemn, Charles was silent, Eugenie was dumb, and Mme. Grandet said no more than usual; if it had been a funeral repast, it could not well have been less lively. When they rose from the table, Charles addressed his aunt and uncle:

"Will you permit me to withdraw? I have some long and difficult letters to write."

"By all means, nephew."

When Charles had left the room, and his amiable relative could fairly assume that he was out of earshot, Grandet gave his wife a sinister glance.

"Mme. Grandet, what we are going to say will be Greek to you; it is half past 7 o'clock, you ought to be off to bed by this time. Good night, my daughter."

He kissed Eugenie, and mother and daughter left the room.

CHAPTER X.

Now, if ever in his life, Grandet displayed all the shrewdness which he had acquired in the course of his long experience of men and business, and all the cunning which had gained him the nickname of "old fox" among those who had felt his teeth a little too sharply.

"M-m-monsieur le P-p-president, you were s-s-saying that b-b-bankruptcy—"

Here the trick of stammering which it had pleased the vine grower to assume so long ago that every one believed it to be natural to him, grew so unbearably tedious for the Cruchot pair, that as they strove to catch the syllables they made unconscious grimaces, moving their lips as if they would fain finish the words in which the cooper entangled both himself and them at his pleasure.

The present business required more deafness, more stammering, more of the dizzy circumlocutions in which Grandet was wont to involve himself, than any previous transaction in his life; for, in the first place, he wished to throw the responsibility of his ideas on some one else; some one else was to suggest his own schemes to him, while he was to keep himself to himself, and leave every one in the dark as to his real intentions.

"Mon-sieur de B-B-Bonfons, you were s-s-saying that in certain cases, p-p-p-proceedings in b-b-bankruptcy might be s-s-s-stopped b-b-b-by—"

"At the instance of a Tribunal of Commerce. That is done every day of the year," said M. C. de Bonfons, guessing, as he thought, at old Grandet's idea, and running away with it. "Listen!" he said, and in the most amiable way he prepared to explain himself.

"I am listening," replied the older man meekly, and his face assumed a demure expression. He looked like some small boy who is laughing in his sleeve at his schoolmaster while appearing to pay the most respectful attention.

"When anybody who is in a large way of business and is much looked up to, like your late brother in Paris, for instance, is likely to find himself insolvent—"

"Ins-s-solvent, do they call it?"

"Yes. When his failure is imminent, the Tribunal of Commerce, to which he is amenable has power by a judgment to appoint liquidators to wind up the business. Liquidation is not bankruptcy, do you understand? It is a disgraceful thing to be a bankrupt, but a liquidation reflects no discredit on a man."

"It is quite a d-d-different thing, if only it d-d-does not cost any more," said Grandet.

"Yes. But a liquidation can be privately arranged without having recourse to the Tribunal of Commerce," said the president. "How is a man declared bankrupt?"

"Yes—how?" inquired Grandet. "I have n-u-never thought about it."

"In the first place, he may himself file a petition and leave his schedule with the clerk of the court; the debtor himself draws it up or authorizes some one else to do so, and it is duly registered. Or, in the second place, his creditors may make him a bankrupt. But supposing the debtor does not file a petition, and none of his creditors make application to the court for a judgment declaring him bankrupt—now let us see what happens then?"

"Yes—let us s-s-see."

"In that case, the family of the deceased, or his representatives, or his residuary legate, or the man himself, if he is not dead, or his friends for him, liquidate his affairs. Now, possibly, you may intend to do this in your brother's case?" inquired the president.

"Oh, Grandet!" exclaimed the notary. "That would be acting very handsomely! We in the provinces have our notions of honor. If you saved your name from dishonor—for it is your name—you would be—"

"Sublime!" cried the president, interrupting his uncle.

(To be continued.)

Fatal Rush.

Reuben—Say, I wouldn't live in town for anything.

Ralph—Why not?

Reuben—O, by the time a man gets to be a big gun in town he has worked so hard that it kills him.

About six months after the ceremony a bride begins to wonder if her husband is really the man she married.

OLD FAVORITES

Massa in the Cold, Cold Ground. Round the meadows am a ringing de darkies' mournful song.

While de mocking birds as singing happy as de day am long.

Where de boy am a weeping on de grassy mound, Dere old massa am a sleeping, sleeping in de cold, cold ground.

CHORUS. Down in de corn field hear dat mournful sound,

All de darkies am a weeping, Massa's in de cold, cold ground.

When de autumn leaves were falling, when de days were cold,

'Twas hard to hear old massa a calling, cause he was so weak and old.

Now de orange trees am blooming on de sandy shore,

Now de summer days am coming, massa never calls no more.

CHORUS. Massa makes de darkies love him, cause he was so kind,

Now they sadly weep above him, mourning cause he leaves them behind.

I cannot work before to-morrow, cause de tear drops flow,

I try to drive away my sorrow, picking on de old banjo.

June. And what is so rare as a day in June? Then, if ever, come perfect days;

Then heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,

And over it softly her warm ear lays; Whether we look, or whether we listen.

We hear life murmur, or see it glisten; Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,

And, groping blindly above it for light, Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;

The flush of life may well be seen Thrilling back over hills and valleys;

The cowslip starts in meadows green. The butter cup catches the sun in its chalice,

And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean

To be some happy creature's palace; The little bird sits at his door in the sun,

And lets his illumined being o'errun With the deluge of summer it receives;

His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,

And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;

He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest—

In the nice ear of nature, which song is the best?

—James Russell Lowell.

"BRAIN FAG" A MYTH.

It Is Eye Strain that Causes the Condition Complained Of.

The so-called "brain fag" is a silly myth. The brain does not tire; intellectual work does not hurt under normal conditions. It is eye strain that causes all the brain fag which the newspapers have been exploiting of late.

Spencer learned this lesson and escaped the tragedy of Nietzsche and Carlyle by dictating his writings, getting others to do his research work for him, and by being willing to go without vast realms of accurate knowledge.

Parkman was driven to similar expedients. But all the rest groaned and suffered even while they wrote little notes and postal cards instead of letters to their best friends.

The result in suffering was incalculable and horrible. There are biographies of these people which do not allude to it; physicians and medical editors have been known who smiled ironically at the "exaggeration" of "vivid imaginations;" and there are numberless fools who think they are excused from all sympathy with a Carlyle or a Nietzsche. They do not know that the misery of the pain of one attack of the nausea of sick headache has not been equaled except in some mediaeval or oriental torture chamber.

When for some profound reason the dominant and oldest instinct of the organism—that for food and nutrition—is violently reversed, it should be plain even to the stupidest mind that the deepest wrong exists and that the very springs of life are being drained. Add to this another symptom almost equally terrible, intense pain in the brain, the organ controlling both character and life processes, and what disease could be more desperate? How many of our patients had sick headache it is impossible to tell, owing to the disinclination, especially in letters and biographies, to speak of vomiting. Probably most of them did suffer from it more or less.—Booklovers' Magazine.

Everything in Its Place.

"Where shall we put all that waste material?" asks the track superintendent of the yardmaster.

"Along the belt line, of course," answers the yardmaster without looking up from his order sheet.—Judge.

If a man is only attentive to his wife in public she is willing to overlook a lot of private neglect.

IN AN UNKNOWN LAND.

Parts of Roman Empire Which No Modern Traveler Has Ever Seen.

Few people appreciate the fact that to-day, at the dawn of the twentieth century, there are still parts of the old Roman empire where no traveler of modern times has been; that there are ancient towns which no tourist has seen, temples and towers that no lover of classic architecture has delighted in, inscriptions in ancient Greek that no savant has as yet deciphered—whole regions, in fact, full of antiquities for which no Baedeker has been written, and which are not shown upon the latest maps. There are regions within our temperate zone where no modern European foot has trod, so far as we are able to tell—regions where the civilization of Greece and Rome once flourished and where fine monuments of classic art and of an unfamiliar art that supplanted the classic waste their beauties upon the ignorant sight of half-civilized nomads, according to a writer in the Century.

To realize the truth of this one needs only to cross the range of mountains that run parallel to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and, avoiding all caravan routes, journey independently about the barren country that lies between these mountains and the Euphrates. Here is a territory which, though not wholly unexplored, is full of most wonderful surprises. Here are cities and towns long deserted, not so great or so imposing, perhaps, as Palmyra, but far better preserved than the city of Zenobia, and giving a much truer picture of the life of the ancient inhabitants than one can draw from those famous ruins.

These towns are not buried, like the great cities of the Mesopotamian plains, nor have their sites been built upon in modern times, as those of the classic cities of Greece have been; they stand out against the sky upon high ridges or lie sheltered in sequestered valleys, presenting to the view of the traveler as he approaches them very much the same aspect that they did in the fourth century of our era, when inhabited by prosperous, cultivated and happy people, or when deserted by those inhabitants some 1,300 years ago.

The ancients in these regions seem to have had two general forms of private residence—one long and low, seldom of more than two stories, and having capacious two-story colonnades or porticoes with inclosed courtyards before them; the other of tower form, four or five stories high, with two or three rooms in each story. Those of the latter sort are naturally preserved in fewer instances than the former, for the reason that high buildings are, generally speaking, a more easy prey to earthquake than low ones. Examples of the long two-story houses are common in every ruined town, many of them in a remarkable state of preservation. The dates inscribed upon them range from 398 to 510 A. D.

The porticoes of these houses were their most interesting feature. Here the ornament was massed, here the inscriptions were carved and here doubtless the leisure hours of the ancient owners were passed. Between the columns of the upper story was a parapet composed of rectangular slabs, paneled, molded and otherwise ornamented. Many of these apparently thin slabs are, in reality, the backs of the settles cut in solid stone, with comfortable seats and curving arms. The wooden floors of all colonnades like this have, of course, perished, so that now when one sits in one of the settles, his feet are necessarily suspended in space; but these seats are an index of the homelike ease and luxury that these ancient people enjoyed in the open loggias of their own residences, when the floors were in place, when a sloping roof afforded welcome shade within the portico and when clinging vines twined about the pillars of stone.

The bazaars of these ancient towns, which are still recognized as such by these people who live among the ruins, who have no bazaars of their own, but have seen them in Aleppo, consist of long, narrow structures facing directly upon the street. Often they occupied both sides of a street of unusual width. The fronts of the shops have two-story porticoes of square monolithic piers carrying equally plain architraves. Behind the portico is a building, also of two stories, composed of a series of small rooms which were undoubtedly storerooms in the ground story and living apartments above. The arrangement was not unlike that of the colonnades of the Greek market places and, indeed, they seem to have been called stoa, as we learn from an inscription upon one of them. We may then suppose that the lower story of the porticoes was employed for the display of merchandise in the daytime and that the goods were removed to the storerooms at night.

It's as difficult for some men to see the point of a joke as it is for them to get over it after they tumble.

Self-made men and eggs are too full of themselves to hold anything else.