

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

By HONRE DE BALZAC

CHAPTER XVIII.

Several months went by. The cooper went to see his wife at various times in the day, and never mentioned his daughter's name—never saw her, nor made the slightest allusion to her. Mme. Grandet's health grew worse and worse; she had not once left her room since that terrible January morning. But nothing shook the old cooper's determination; he was hard, cold and unyielding as a block of granite. He came and went, his manner of life was in nowise altered; but he did not stammer now, and he talked less; perhaps, too, in matters of business, people found him harder than before, but errors crept into his bookkeeping.

Something had certainly happened in the Grandet family, both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed on that head; and "What can be the matter with the Grandets?" became a stock question which people asked each other at every social gathering in Saumur.

A little later the secret leaked out, and the whole town knew that ever since New Year's Day Mme. Grandet had been locked up in her room by her father's orders, and that there she lived on bread and water in solitary confinement and without a fire. Nanon, it was reported, cooked dainties for her and brought food secretly to her room at night. It was said that only when Grandet was out of the house could the young girl nurse her mother, or indeed see her at all.

Grandet had just entered upon his sixty-seventh year. Avarice had gained a stronger hold upon him during the past two years of his life; indeed, all lasting passions grow with man's growth; and it had come to pass with him, as with all men whose lives are ruled by one master idea, that he clung with all the force of his imagination to the symbol which represented that idea for him. Gold—to have gold, that he might see and touch it, had become with him a perfect monomania. His disposition to tyrannize had also grown with his love of money, and it seemed to him to be monstrous that he should be called upon to give up the least portion of his property on the death of his wife. Was he to render an account of her fortune, and to have an inventory drawn up of everything he possessed—and put it all up to auction?

"That would be stark ruin," he said aloud to himself, as he stood among his vines. He made up his mind and came back at dinner time fully determined on his course. He would humor Eugenie, and coax and cajole her so that he might die royally, keeping the control of his millions in his hands until his latest sigh. It happened that he let himself in with his master key; he crept noiselessly as a wolf up the stairs to his wife's room, which he entered just as Eugenie was setting the dressing case. In all its golden glory, upon her mother's bed. The two women had stolen a pleasure in Grandet's absence; they were looking at the portraits and tracing out Charles' features in his mother's likeness.

"It is just his forehead and his mouth!" Eugenie was saying, as the vine grower opened the door.

Mme. Grandet saw how her husband's eyes darted upon the gold. "Oh! heaven have pity upon us!" she cried.

The vine grower seized upon the dressing case as a tiger might spring upon a sleeping child.

"What may this be?" he said, carrying off the treasure to the window. "Gold! solid gold!" he cried, "and plenty of it, too; there is a couple of pounds' weight here. Ah! so this was what Charles gave you in exchange for your pretty gold pieces! Why did you not tell me? It was a good stroke of business, little girl. You are your father's own daughter, I see. This belongs to Charles, doesn't it?" the good man went on.

"Yes, father; it is not mine. That case is a sacred trust."

"Tut, tut, tut! he has gone off with your money; you ought to make good the loss of your little treasure."

"Oh, father!"

The old man had taken out his pocket knife with a view to wrenching away a plate of the precious metal, and for the moment had been obliged to lay the case on a chair beside him. Eugenie sprang forward to secure her treasure; but the cooper put out his arm to prevent this, and thrust her back so roughly that she fell on to the bed.

"Sir! sir!" cried the mother, rising and sitting upright. Grandet had drawn out his knife, and was about to insert the blade beneath the plate.

"Father!" cried Eugenie, going down on her knees and dragging herself nearer to him, "for your own soul's salvation, father, if you have any regard for my life, do not touch it! The case is not yours, and it is not mine. It belongs to an unhappy kinsman, who gave it into my keeping, and I ought to give it back to him untouched. Do not pull it to pieces. You will bring dishonor upon me. Father! do you hear me?"

"For pity's sake, sir!" entreated the mother.

The shrill cry rang through the house and brought the frightened Nanon upstairs. Eugenie caught up a knife that lay within her reach.

"Well?" said Grandet, calmly, with a cold smile on his lips.

"Father, if you cut away a single scrap of gold, I shall stab myself with this knife. It is your doing that my mother is dying, and now my death will also be laid at your door. It shall be wound for wound."

Grandet held his knife suspended above the case, looked at his daughter, and hesitated.

"Would you really do it, Eugenie?" he asked.

"She would do as she says," cried Nanon. "Do be sensible, sir, for once in your life."

The cooper wavered for a moment, looking first at the gold and then at his daughter. Mme. Grandet fainted.

"There, sir, you see the mistress is dying," cried Nanon.

"There! there! child, do not let us fall out about a box. Just take it back!" cried the cooper hastily throwing the case on to the bed. "And, Nanon, go for M. Bergerin. Come! come! mother," he said, and he kissed his wife's hand; "we have made it up, haven't we, little girl? No more dry bread; you shall eat whatever you like. * * * Ah! she is opening her eyes. Well, now, little mother, don't take on so! Look! I am going to kiss Eugenie! She loves her cousin, does she? She shall marry him if she likes; she shall keep her little case for him. But you must live for a long while yet, my poor wife."

"Oh, how can you treat your wife and daughter in this way!" moaned Mme. Grandet.

"I will never do so again, never again!" cried the cooper. "You shall see, my poor wife."

He went to his strong box room and returned with a handful of louis d'or, which he scattered on the coverlet.

"There, Eugenie! there, wife! those are for you," he said, fingering the gold coins as they lay. "Come, cheer up; and get well, you shall want for nothing, neither you nor Eugenie. There are a hundred louis for her. You will not give them away, will you, eh, Eugenie?"

Mme. Grandet and her daughter gazed at each other in amazement.

"Take back the money, father; we want nothing, nothing but your love."

"Oh, well, just as you like," he said, as he pocketed the louis, "let us live together like good friends. Let us all go down to the dining room and have dinner and play loto every evening, and be as merry as the maids. Eh! my wife?"

"Alas! how I wish that I could, if you would like it," said the dying woman, "but I am not strong enough to get up."

"Poor mother!" said the cooper, "you do not know how much I love you; and, you, too, child!"

He drew his daughter to him and embraced her with fervor.

"Oh! how pleasant it is to kiss one's daughter, after a squabble, my little girl! There, mother! do you see? We are quite at one again now. Just go and lock that away," he said to Eugenie, as he pointed to the case. "There! there! don't be frightened; I will never say another word to you about it."

M. Bergerin, who was regarded as the cleverest doctor in Saumur, came before very long. He told Grandet plainly after the interview that the patient was very seriously ill; that any excitement might be fatal to her; that with a light diet, perfect tranquillity, and the most constant care, her life might possibly be prolonged until the end of the autumn.

"Will it be an expensive illness?" asked the worthy householder. "After all, M. Bergerin, you are a man of honor. I can depend upon you, can I not? Come and see my wife whenever, and as often as you think it necessary. Preserve her life. My good wife—I am very fond of her, you see, though I may not show it; it is all shut up inside me, and I am one that takes things terribly to heart; I am in trouble, too. It all began with my brother's death; I am spending, oh!—heaps of money in Paris for him—the very eyes out of my head, in fact, and it seems as if there were no end to it. If you can save my wife, save her, even if it takes a hundred or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent wishes that his wife might be restored to health, for this question of the inheritance was like a foretaste of death for him; in spite of his readiness to fulfill the least wishes of the astonished mother and daughter in every possible way; in spite of Eugenie's tenderness and most devoted care, it was evident that Mme. Grandet's life was rapidly drawing to a close. Day by day she grew weaker. She seemed to have no more vitality than the autumn leaves; and as the sunlight shined through the leaves turns them to gold, so she seemed to be transformed by the light of heaven. Her love for her daughter, her meek virtues, her angelic patience, had never shone more brightly than in the month of October, 1822, when she passed away. On the morrow after her mother's death, it seemed to Eugenie that she had yet one more reason for clinging fondly to the old house where she had been born, and where she had found life so hard of late—it became for her the place where her mother had died. She could not see the old chair set on little blocks of wood, the place by the window where her mother used to sit, without shedding tears. Her father showed her such tenderness, and took such care of her, that she began to think that she had never understood his nature; he used to come to her room and take her down to breakfast on his arm, and sit looking at her for whole hours with something almost like kindness in his eyes, with the same brooding look that he gave his gold. Indeed, the old cooper almost trembled before his daughter, and was altogether so unlike himself that Nanon and the Cruchotins wondered at these signs of weakness, and set it down to his advanced age; they began to fear that the old man's mind was giving way. But when the day came on which the family began to wear their mourning, M. Cruchot, who alone was in his client's confidence, was invited to

dinner, and these mysteries were explained. Grandet waited till the table had been cleared and the doors carefully shut.

Then he began, "My dear child, you are mother's heiress, and there are some little matters of business that we must settle between us. Is not that so, eh, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Is it really pressing; must it be settled to-day, father?"

"Yes, yes, little girl. I could not endure this suspense any longer, and I am sure that you would not make things hard for me. Everything must be decided to-night."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Why, little girl, it is not for me to tell you. You tell her, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle, your father wants neither to divide nor to sell his property, nor to pay a heavy succession duty upon the ready money. So if these complications are to be avoided, there must be no inventory made out, and all the property must remain undivided for the present."

"Cruchot, are you quite sure of what you are saying that you talk in this way before a child?"

"Let me say what I have to say, Grandet."

"Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter would plunder me. You would not plunder me, would you, little girl?"

"But what am I to do, M. Cruchot?" asked Eugenie, losing patience.

"Well," said the notary, "you must sign this deed, by which you renounce your claims to your mother's property; the property would be secured to you, but your father would have the use of it for his life, and there would be no need to make a division now."

"I understand nothing of all this that you are saying," Eugenie answered; "give me the deed and show me where I am to sign my name."

Grandet looked from the document to his daughter, and again from his daughter to the document. His agitation was so great that he actually wiped several drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"I would much rather you simply waived all claim to your poor dear mother's property, little girl," he broke in, "instead of signing that deed. It will cost a lot to register it. I would rather you renounced your claims and trusted to me for the future. I would allow you a good round sum, say a hundred francs every month."

"I will do as you like, father."

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, "it is my duty to point out to you that you are robbing yourself without guarantee."

"What does that matter to me?"

CHAPTER XIX.

"Do be quiet, Cruchot. So it is settled, quite settled!" cried Grandet, taking his daughter's hand and striking his own into it. "You will not go back from your word, Eugenie? You are a good girl."

In his joy he embraced his daughter, almost suffocating her as he did so.

By noon next day the declaration was drawn up, and Eugenie herself signed away all her rights to her heritage. Yet a year slipped by, and the cooper had not kept his promise, and Eugenie had not received a sou of the monthly income which was to have been hers; when Eugenie spoke to him about it, half laughingly, he hurried up to his room, and when he came down again he handed her a third of the jewelry which he had purchased of his nephew.

"There! child," he said, with a certain sarcastic ring in his voice; "will you take these for your twelve hundred francs?"

"Oh! father, really? Will you really give them to me?"

"You should have as much next year again," said he, flinging it into her lap; "and so, before very long, you will have all his trinkets," he added, rubbing his hands. He had made a very good bargain, thanks to his daughter's sentiment, and was in high good humor.

Five years went by in this way, and no event disturbed their monotonous existence. Eugenie and her father lived a life of methodical routine with the same regularity of movement that characterized the old clock. Every one knew that there had been a profound sorrow in Mme. Grandet's life; every circle in Saumur had its suspicions as to the state of the heiress' heart, but she never let fall a word that could enlighten any one.

In the year 1827 her father began to feel the infirmities of age, and was obliged to take her still further into his confidence; she learned the full extent of his landed possessions. Grandet had reached the age of 82, and toward the end of the year had a paralytic seizure, from which he never rallied. Death came up at last, and the vine grower's strong frame wrestled with the Destroyer.

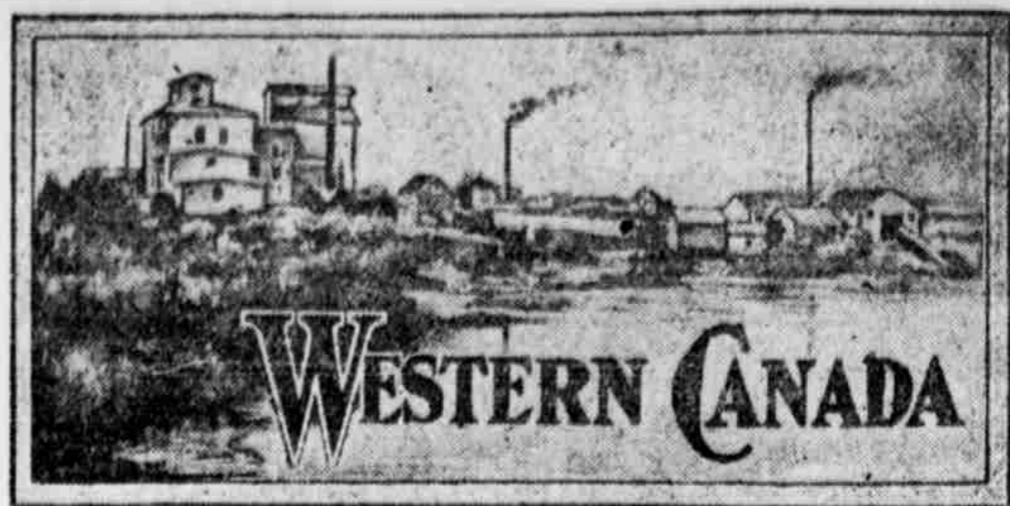
So Eugenie Grandet was alone in the world, and her house was left to her desolate. There was no one but Nanon with whom she could talk over her troubles; she could look into no other eyes and find a response in them; big Nanon was the only human being who loved her for herself. For Eugenie, Nanon was a providence; she was no longer a servant, she was a humble friend.

M. Cruchot informed Eugenie that she had three hundred thousand livres a year, derived from landed property, besides six millions in the 3 per cents and in ready money two millions in gold, and a hundred thousand francs in silver, without counting any arrears that were due. Altogether her property amounted to about seventeen million francs.

"Where can my cousin be?" she said to herself.

On the day when M. Cruchot laid these facts before his new client, together with the information that the estate was now clear. Eugenie and Nanon sat on either side of the hearth in the parlor, now so empty and so full of memories. Everything recalled past days, from her mother's chair set on its wooden blocks to the glass tumbler out of which her cousin once drank.

(To be continued.)



Special correspondence.

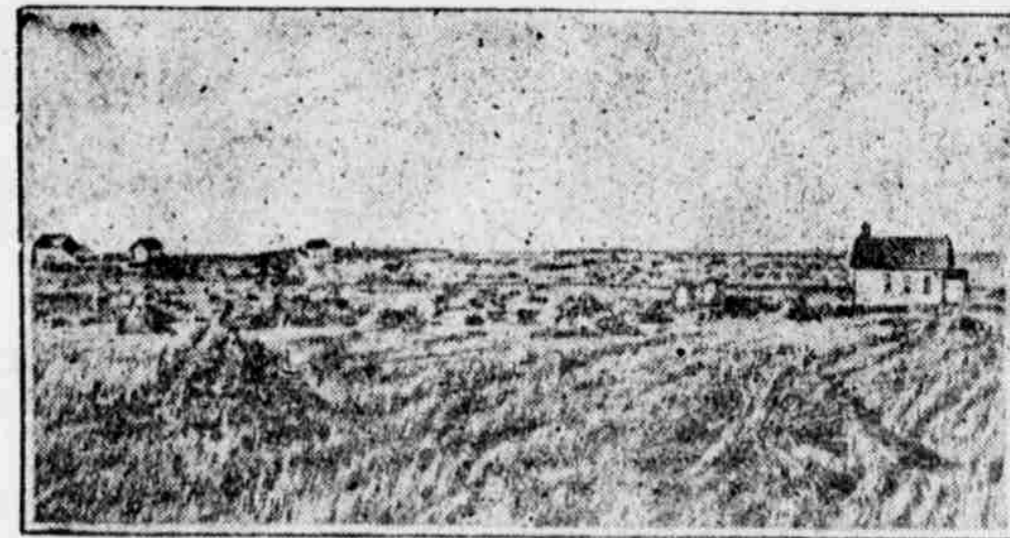
The old Romans used to say that Gaul was divided into three parts; so is the Canadian Northwest. Gaul's divisions were political; those of the Western Canada's prairies are created by the unerring hand of nature.

Chiefly because of the elevation of the country, the absence of large lakes and rivers, and the operations of the "Chinook" or Pacific ocean winds, which readily cross the Rocky Mountains in Southern Alberta through gaps and passes, the southwestern portion of the Canadian provinces is regarded as somewhat arid, and less fertile than other portions of the country. Although this has been a prevailing idea in the past, it has been left for American settlers, who have invaded this district within the past two or three years, to prove that splendid crops of grain can be grown on the land, which had hitherto been the feeding ground for the herds of cattle and bands of horses that ranged there.

That ranching is carried on most successfully in other portions of the prairies West, just as agriculture is to a limited extent conducted successfully within this boundary is fully established, but taken as a whole it constitutes a territory above all others most admirably adapted to this particular industry.

The buffalo, bunch and other grasses that grow in profusion in this district and retain their nutritive properties the year round, and the moderate climate of mid-winter rendered such by the Chinook winds preventing any considerable depth of snow at any time, especially fit the district for the peculiar methods of the ranchers—raising his herds the year round in the open country.

Englishmen and Americans in the western territories are bringing in their herds as fast as they can and leasing or purchasing land in lots from 1,000 to 20,000 acres from the Dominion Government. An idea of the growth of the industry will, however, be gathered from the fact that in 1899 there were but 41,471 head of cattle shipped and sold from the ranches, these figures ran to 55,129 in 1900, and to 160,000 in 1903, averaging \$40 per head for the owners.



SCHOOLHOUSE AND FARMS, MORDEN, MANITOBA.

But it takes a great many ranchers and a large number of cattle to cover an area of 200,000,000 acres, the area available for ranching in the Canadian Northwest.

The Second Part.

The second part of the Canadian prairies embrace the great wheat growing belt of the country, which is easily a half larger than any other in the world. It includes about 150,000,000 acres. As it is comparatively free of broken land, large lakes and rivers about 125,000,000 acres of it can be brought under the plow. Placing a farmer on every half section (320 acres) it can comfortably locate 800,000 farmers or 4,000,000 of an agricultural community. A glance now at what the farmers of the territories are doing will give the reader a better idea of what can be done in this great wheat growing zone. The territorial government reports show that in



CORN CUTTING IN CANADA.

1903 there were raised 16,629,149 bushels of spring wheat off 837,234 acres, an average of 19.04 bushels per acre; off 440,662 acres of oats there were grown 14,179,705 bushels, an average of 32.17 bushels per acre; 69,067 acres produced 1,741,209 bushels of barley, 24.65 to the acre, and 32,341 acres produced 292,853 bushels of flaxseed, 9.03 to the acre. As but 1,383,434 acres, or a little better than one per cent of the entire wheat growing area of the territories, was under crop, a little figuring shows 13 per cent of the entire country under wheat will raise the 200,000,000 that Great Britain annually requires from outside countries. It is a fairly safe statement to make that in 12 or 15 years the Canadian prairies will be supplying the entire demands of the mother country.

In this part of the country wheat is king, and here it is raised in the greatest possible perfection by a combination of

soil and climate in its favor, and the tendency has been to neglect the more laborious branches of husbandry for which the country is equally well adapted.

Free Homestead Lands.

There is yet a large quantity of government land for homesteading in this country and as in everything else, "the early bird catches the worm." Those who come first are first served. When it is preferred to purchase railway or other company lands they can be got at from \$5 per acre up. This section cannot be better closed than by showing practically what is made by wheat growing in this district. The average from the first operations is 20 bushels per acre. Breaking the prairie, as first plowing is called, is, of course, an exceptional expenditure,



TYPICAL WESTERN CANADA TOWN.

as when it is once done it is done for all time. This costs about \$3.50 per acre. After the breaking, plowing and seeding, harvesting threshing and marketing—all expenses combined amount to about \$5.25 per acre, that is, if a man likes everything done it will cost him \$5.25 per acre. If he does the work himself he is earning wages while producing at that figure, now as the average yield is 20 bushels, and the average price 60 cents—\$12 per acre—the difference between the result and cost, \$6.75, is the profit of grain growing year in and year out in the great wheat belt of the Canadian prairie country. If a man has a half section of land and puts half of it, 160 acres, under wheat, which is a very common occurrence, he makes \$1,080 on

wheat alone, and should make, if he is a capable farmer enough, out of other crops, safe of cattle, dairy and other products, to keep himself and family the year round besides.

The Third Division.

The third division of this great country lies to the north of the wheat belt, between it and what is known as the forest country. As wheat growing implies the raising of all cereals, that can profitably be raised in the country, the remaining branches of mixed farming are dairying and the raising of farm stock. It must not be supposed that dividing the prairies in this way is saying that any one portion of the country possesses better soil than another, for such is not the case—all districts are equally fertile, but the topography and climatic influences, etc., differ, as well as the conditions for production. Ranching and grain growing are carried on quite successfully in this northern zone; but it is found more profitable to combine all the features of the industry. On account of the land being more broken than in the southern district, though the soil is equally fertile, there are not the same opportunities for extensive operations; and while cattle raising is as profitable here as elsewhere, different methods have to be adopted for their protection, especially in the winter season.

An authority on the subject has stated that agriculture in any country never reaches the minimum of development until the farmers engage at least proportionately in dairying, though the surroundings must always determine the extent to which any feature of the industry may be prosecuted. It is a certainty then that of the agricultural possibilities of this portion of the prairie country he estimated by its adaptability to dairy farming, even the most skeptical must acknowledge they are unsurpassed in any country in the world. As intimated above, even dairying may be successfully carried on in any corner of the territories, but this zone has everything to recommend it as the ideal spot for this branch of the business.

The mining districts of British Columbia, which consume an immense lot of dairy products, are close at hand and always afford a good market for butter, cheese, pork, poultry and eggs. When in the future that country is overstocked Great Britain offers as now a ready market for whatever may be produced.