

# The Beauxlieux Diamonds

By Mrs. HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

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### CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

She listened; but she hardly understood him. She feared; but she half-embodied her with his feeling. She doubted if he were not possessed of a sacred fury. And while she was sure that her son—Beauxlieux—could not be otherwise than right, yet a great melancholy oppressed her; for the first time she saw thorns shake and the old order of things go by. "Oh, what shall we do with him, M. Etienne?" she cried when he had gone.

"Nothing," said M. Etienne, "the good God has him in hand."

Sometimes when Beauxlieux came home, he had strange tales of his experience in the prisons, where he had gained permission to practice and to study. Sometimes he had nothing at all to say, and if words fell short, still he would be that which will suffice for the new Crusade, in saying those who are in this day the sepulchre of Christ, in carrying succor to how many of the sad and sorry!

It had plainly become a passion with him, this care for the spirits in prison, not only behind iron grates, but in the bonds of rude flesh. His mother could not explain why the whole thing gave her such vague uneasiness. She turned for comfort, as usual, to M. Etienne. "It is time that he rugged himself, that I found for him some young girl, with a sufficient dot," her thoughts summing up an array of possible and impossible young princesses.

"But my people, my friends, are gone. The Chevalier St. Malo died last year. Mortgages is immense. I doubt if there is one left in the world who knows that the Duchess des Sarazines Beauxlieux lives! And he begins to have money. The bourgeois spirit of the time will seize him if we do not beware. Is it that it is the habit of all young men, playing, as he does, at a profession, so soon to arrive at wealth?"

"I—I do not know," stammered M. Etienne. "We—we may be sure—"

The duchess looked at him in surprise. Sure of what? Was M. Etienne disturbed that Beauxlieux found money easily? Of course whatever a Sarazine Beauxlieux attempted, he would do as well as the best. Had not even poor little Pierre made money?

"What is it, monsieur? You, also, you a physician, you should know."

"I have always had sufficient, madame," said M. Etienne, with an air of cold restraint quite foreign to him, and leaving her with an abrupt bow, as if he heard some one speaking without, he paused in the great hall to wipe his forehead. What he did know very well was that no young physician could

not eat in these days. She did not sleep. White and thin and with a little breathless air, the blackness of her gown was not so black as the shadow that surrounded her. "They were his," she said over and over to herself, like the tolling of a bell. "They were his—de quele maniere. He had only to speak. I would have put them into his hand. But to—oh, no, no, no, no, let me not say the word! It is impossible. Mother of God, and it is true! Oh! Oh! Oh! Beauxlieux! Beauxlieux! my son!" And her grief was more hopeless than that of another who buries her child.

Sometimes she would wonder if she were dreaming. Or even, with a throb of relief, if it could be that she were crazed. Suddenly she would deny it all, and accuse herself of an infamy. She to suspect the noblest, the truest, the loftiest of his line! She to believe evil of that upright, proud soul! And then the facts flashed before her again like a chain of lightning on the darkness—the case that had insensibly come into the house, the accused gowns from Worth, the frequency of the costly journeys, the repairs of the roofs of the chateau. Where had Beauxlieux obtained the money? "Oh, I can bear it no more," she cried once, starting back from the embrasure of the window as M. Etienne came in, and not knowing that she spoke aloud, "I can bear it no longer."

"Pardon me," said the monsieur, "I have overheard. I have seen here for that your grace is troubled. Have you lost all confidence in me, madame? At least, will you not remember that I am your physician?" He stood there, as pale as she, his head bowed, his sad eyes at her feet.

She ran toward him, but stopped, tottering, so that she would have fallen but for his quick arm. "Oh, monsieur!" she cried. "You are all I have—for he has broken my heart!"

"You are wrong," he said to her, when some time afterward, with sobs and tears and wild cries and exclamations, she had unburdened her heart. "It is just as much out of the question as that the sky should fall. Doubt Beauxlieux? I would as soon—let me say it as I would say a prayer—doubt the Lord. It is simply impossible."

"Oh, so I said. I."

"We will let it rest there then."

"Oh, Etienne! it is so long that you have been a comfort, a help, a shield to me."

"Oh, but the money, Etienne!" she cried, with recurring memories coming like the waves of subsiding waters. "We who have been so long without money—all that money he must have!"

Wringing her hands again.

"That is his affair. It is not mine. If the Duke des Sarazines Beauxlieux has a purse belting him, he came by it as the earth comes to the sun, through the grace of God. It is not possible that white should be black, and Beauxlieux is white! White as innocence and goodness. No, no, no, do not give it a thought. You wrong yourself. My God! You've wronged him. We must look elsewhere."

"But why does the suspicion—oh, the terrible, hateful suspicion, the dreadful facts? Why do they all range themselves about him?" she persisted.

"Alas! Alas! Why indeed do I live? Why does not my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth? It is my son of whom I speak! Oh, we have had misfortune, Etienne, such misfortune! But never such misfortune, such despair as this!"



The Duchess Herself Opened Them.

his cows and sheep or crowding the cellars of filthy city courts!

But now he was coming home! And when she saw him she forgot danger. He was there and the sun shone. With Beauxlieux at her feet, with M. Etienne at the other side of the fire, what more had she to ask? She had Olympe prepare a toilette for her to wear on this birthday that should make him remember to whom he belonged—his mother still the grande dame—and she went with Olympe to the secret place in the wall to bring out the old Beauxlieux diamonds, with half a pleasant anticipation of the flash of their awakening, of the sudden sheets of luster that, after their three years' imprisonment, should stream out as if they would illumine the very abyss into which the glory of the Sarazines Beauxlieux had fallen.

One by one Olympe took the cases and carried them to the dressing table. The duchess herself opened the large one, and instead of the burst of radiance—nothing. Only the loose, soft chamouis lining of the thing gave out an empty gleam. "There was some mistake. How was it? Could the jewels have been crowded into the other cases?" Their fingers trembled, they knew not why, as they tried to open them. One and all they were empty. The seldom worn coronet, the lesser diadem, the rivières, those superb and matchless stones of the fillets and of the collar and of the sunburst that had been theirs for more than a thousand years, had vanished as if they had been soap-bubbles.

### CHAPTER V.

What mystery to the hidden niche; they dragged out the iron ox. Both of them were empty also. The two women confronted each other, white and shaking. They had been robbed!



"I Can Bear It No Longer," She Cried.

bring home to his mother, from time to time, Worth costumes, hothouse luxuries, costly wines, or a pony carriage to take the air, even though he denied himself everything as Beauxlieux did, and gave them to her because, sensible that they were as much to her after long seclusion as sun and air to those others, the sufferers, as equal laws to the craftsmen, as liberty and life to the slave, as the bit of mother earth to all that tread upon it. "She is one of my people, too," he said to M. Etienne. "And to each according to his need!" And then, by an unavoidable accident, M. Etienne had seen a scrap of paper, on which was noted, apparently, a balance that had made him feel as if there was nothing real left in the world. He called to mind the gaming debts of the old duke, his grandfather, stories of wild play, in which whole provinces changed hands and lands and serfs were staked against the value of a fair pretendue's affections. But anything like that, he knew as well as he knew that the sky was above him, was impossible to Beauxlieux. The worst he feared, he the royalist, was that place and power were throwing fortune into the young noble's hands, so peradventure to win him to themselves. How he had come by such a sum of money his friend and tutor could not say—it had a strange look—but under any and all circumstances Beauxlieux must be right. What was of more consequence to M. Etienne than all the rest was that the duchess was uneasy concerning it.

Beauxlieux's twenty-fourth birthday was now approaching. He was away with Jean—Jean in the priestly garb he always wore now—on one of their trips which he called journeys into the

What misery! What cruelty! Who was it could mislead them so? Who knew of the hiding place? Who had taken them? "Do not speak," said the duchess. "Be quiet till I can think! Oh, say nothing, say nothing till I can think," she murmured over and over. "Say nothing, my Olympe! Say nothing!"

Without question there was not a stone or spark left of the Beauxlieux diamonds.

The duchess could have trusted Olympe with her life; she knew, of course, that nothing would be said about the loss of the diamonds till she spoke herself. And it seemed to her as if she had herself been stricken with dumbness. All her shadowy fears vanished like thin phantoms before this terrible reality of evil. Not that the diamonds were gone; not that any one could reproach her for neglect, was she concerned. What had she ever cared for them, other than as they represented the long-descended luster of the family itself? And it was not she who had been robbed, any more than the long line of all that dead and gone people. She placed the great hall and looked angrily at the dark portraits—were the eyes there stabbing her with reproach for what she had brought among them? She went out and essayed to busy herself among her late lingering flowers. It was no use; there was a worm at every root. When she walked along the shore, the restless wash and roar of the water was the only thing in tune with the tumult of her thoughts. When she came in she whirled, without reading it, a letter of Beauxlieux into the fire that always smoldered on the hearth, and sat there wrapped in a cloud of gloom. She did

not eat in these days. She did not sleep. White and thin and with a little breathless air, the blackness of her gown was not so black as the shadow that surrounded her. "They were his," she said over and over to herself, like the tolling of a bell. "They were his—de quele maniere. He had only to speak. I would have put them into his hand. But to—oh, no, no, no, no, let me not say the word! It is impossible. Mother of God, and it is true! Oh! Oh! Oh! Beauxlieux! Beauxlieux! my son!" And her grief was more hopeless than that of another who buries her child.

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