

A FAMILY SECRET

Now it happened one morning that Lucy, having been out in the garden cutting some choice flowers for a dinner party, passed that way, and lingered a moment at the door as if half inclined to knock and enter. She stood still, hesitating a moment, and then became aware that the door was already

"One thing is positive, she must be saved from all sorrow. There is enough and to spare in the world without calling it down necessarily on her innocent head. Heaven forgive me for my selfish reservations and deceit."

"You can trust me, sir," replied the harsh but earnest voice of the strange groom.

The words had fallen upon her like molten lead. The whole sentence was bad enough, but the last—
"Heaven forgive me my selfish reservations and deceit."
Here was a revelation—and the domestic whom he had dragged from the mire made his confidant. It was more than a woman could bear, she thought. She must speak, she could endure this silent agony no longer. She would speak, she would have a positive explanation, and know the full measure of

But pride came to the relief of Lucy, and when Hubert joined her, a little vexed—and his handsome face with a gloomy shade upon it—she made no remark.

Hubert was rather surprised, and even a little displeased, to see his wife so rapidly play a part which was unusual to her. Next instant a cloud crossed his brow, and when he joined the ladies after dinner he contrived to whisper to Lucy an instant apart: "You are a little feverish. I noticed it all dinner time," he said. "Shall I excuse you to our guests?"

"By no means," she replied, in a tone of surprise and veneration. "Because I was in unusual spirits to-day must I be feverish?"

"May I ask, Lucy, what has occasioned them?"

"I really do not know. There are secrets which none of us can fathom, Hubert, and it is best to shun them."

And without further explanation she joined a neighboring group.

"Secrets which none of us can fathom," he murmured, as she turned away; "pray heaven you may never fathom mine! I would feel a fatal blow, I fear me, to your ease of mind and happiness. But courage—"

Lucy was in agonies while speaking thus to her husband. She had never expected to have a wish or a thought different from his, and now already, in this early period of their married career, they were playing, it seemed, some fatal game of cross purposes.

Unfortunately, men are not so quick-sighted in affairs of the heart as women, and Hubert, instead of ascribing his wife's manner to cares of mind, was certain that her ailment was physical, and capable of ex-

fore, with a curious eye, and was glad to see that by degrees she grew calmer; and when she retired for the night was very much in her usual spirits.

He remained in conversation with the male party staying in the house until rather late a late hour, adjoining to the stately old refectory, which, for modern usages, had been transferred into a smoking-room and card-playing *saculum*.

Hubert seldom broke into the night; but on this occasion a fourth at whilst

When he joined Lucy she was asleep. Never had she looked more beautiful, as she lay in calm and placid slumber; that, however, had not been obtained without a struggle, for a tear hung on her eyelashes. "What can the darling have wept about?" he murmured; "I must ask her. Heaven grant that she have no secrets from me!" The next day he had forgotten his resolve.

the more readily that Lucy was up and out before he awoke, and contrived to avoid any private conference with him before breakfast.

Then came letters—one of the chief excitements of a country house—and there were several for Hubert.

One made him start, and glance with a heightened color and scared mien towards Lucy, who avoided his glance.

She had seen his quick look, however, and had noticed that he concealed the letter.

"Lucy," he said, with something like hesitation, "I am again called away on business, and may be detained. If I do not return to-night do not be uneasy."

"I shall be uneasy, of course," she replied, a little sharply; "but, of course, I must submit."

"You speak strangely, Lucy," he continued, lingering near her.

"Do you think so?" he said in a musing way; "well, perhaps I do. There may be reasons for it, however, which you cannot understand."

"Because I am not tried. I have no secrets—why have you?" she asked, passionately.

"Secrets! Do you think I have secrets?" he continued, very sadly and sorrowfully.

"Well, well, perhaps I have. But if you wish it you shall know all; it was neither just nor honest, I dare say, to wed you with-

my return to-morrow you shall know all, even, Lucy, my darling, if it separates us for ever."

And overcome by strange emotions he turned away, and shortly after left the house.

Lucy retired to her room, petrified with astonishment and dread. At last she was to know what it was that stood between herself and her husband—she was to learn the secret that was slowly but surely undermining their love and confidence.

any known means of conveying thought, and Lucy rushed immediately to the wild conclusion that Hubert was about to subject her to some humiliating discovery—that she was to hear a confession of his having always loved another; in fact, an avowal that he had married her from purely interested motives.

CHAPTER XXII.

Lucy, by means of that freemasonry which exists in a remarkable degree between ladies of the same station and position, easily impressed her female guests with the necessity of her having repose. There were none present intimate enough with her to make a confidant of, but it is easy to let people see that one is out of sorts. So the three married dames present on the occasion took themselves to one of their bedrooms, and there contrived to amuse themselves very satis-

Mrs. Church saw at once that something was the matter, and in her blunt and straightforward way determined to fathom the truth.

She followed Lucy to her chamber, and moved about in an uneasy and restless manner.

"Mrs. Mordaunt," she at last said, abruptly, "you are not well."

(To be Continued.)

Joseph Langvin, trader of St. Marc, has assigned at the instance of A. M. Archambault of St. Antoine for about \$5500

