

**WHITE LIES. A
STORY. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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White Lies. A Story. In Three Volumes, Vol. II by Charles Reade

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A Story.

BY

CHARLES READE.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

Vol. II.

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WHITE LIES.

CHAPTER I.

NOTARY read notary. The pieces of that placard flung in Perrin's face were a revelation as well as an affront.

He made inquiries, and soon learned the statesman was the champion of Beaurepaire and also a client of Picard. Putting the two together, he suspected his rival had been playing with him. 'Picard is playing that young ruffian's game,' said he. 'Perhaps means to lend him his money instead of me.' His suspicions went no farther.

But the next day a gossip told him the Beaurepaire tenants had been screwed up thirty pegs.

He saw at once the consequences to the estate. His vengeance would escape him as well as his prize.

He took a quick resolution and acted upon it.

He rode to Commandant Raynal.

That officer, it may be remembered, had months ago given him a commission to buy an estate. He had been looking out for one for him ever since, but unluckily he had not been able to find a bad

enough one to suit. An agent looks not to his employer's interest, but his own. The small nominal per centage he receives is a mere blind. He would not give you the detriment of his judgment for a paltry five per cent. From a pianoforte to a house, and down again to that most despised property, an author's creation, agency is an organized swindle.

Perrin had his eye on Beaurepaire when Raynal first gave him the commission: but he never for a moment intended to get his employer such a bargain as that. He was waiting till some one should have an estate to sell worth one hundred and eighty thousand francs. He would have gone to this man and said, 'Now if I get you your money, five per cent. comes to me of course.' This being assented to, he would have kept quiet a while: then he would have come back, and said, 'I can get you a customer, but you must ask two hundred and fifty thousand francs—the odd seventy thousand over your price is for me.'

This is the principle of agency as practised in France, in England, and above all in Poland, where an apple can't change hands without an Israelite to come between the two silly natives, and pass it across after peeling it thick. But neither in France, England, nor Poland, was the principle in all its branches better understood than by this worthy notary.

And to those principles he was now for the first

time about to be a traitor. Behold him jogging along on the dun pony, to give his principal the best bargain in the country side.

A sharp pang of remorse shot through him at the thought: but he never wavered. Fortunately for himself he was not all one vice. He was vindictive, as well as grinding; was capable of sacrificing not his interest perhaps, but a per centage on it, to revenge. When we are bent on doing a thing we find reasons of all sorts. He said to himself—'I shall be his steward, his agent; he is a soldier—never there—perhaps get knocked on the head—die intestate—aha?' Short, a vista of contingencies.

Raynal cut short the notary's glowing description of the unrivalled bargain he had with unexampled zeal and fidelity secured him.

'What is to be done?'

'We must go together to the mayor at Santenoy.'

'Good.'

'How many days shall you require to get your money from your bankers?'

'My bankers? it is all in my knapsack.'

'Ah! then we can settle this immediately.'

'No! we can't! public business first, private afterwards.' He consulted a card. 'To-morrow after one o'clock I'm free—be at Santenoy at three—will that do?'

'Yes monsieur.'

‘Get everything ready—I will ride down by three. How much money?’

‘About two hundred and fifty thousand francs.’

‘I did not ask you about how much,’ said the precisian. ‘I said how much? never mind, I’ll bring enough. Good day.’

Next day at a quarter before three Perrin was parading in some anxiety before the Mairie. Just at the stroke of three up clattered the commandant in full uniform; off his horse in a moment, and got a boy to hold it. He gave Perrin two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and sent him to the Mairie to buy Beurepaire while he went to inspect a small barrack that was building in the town of Santenoy.

Perrin went in and had audience of the mayor, and announced a purchaser of Beurepaire: the mayor’s countenance fell. He loitered about; was a long time finding this document and that: at last he said, ‘have you got the money?’

‘Yes!’ said the notary, ‘two hundred and fifty thousand francs. Here they are.’

The mayor potted about again; found a paper: put on his spectacles. ‘That is not the price,’ said he, ‘the estate is worth two hundred and ninety five thousand francs.’

‘How can that be, monsieur? two hundred and fifty thousand is the figure on your placard.’

‘So it is,’ said the mayor apologetically. ‘I

ought to have altered it. The order from the directory mentions no sum. It is in general terms: the estate is to be sold for a certain sum, over and above the capital of the rents at twenty seven years' purchase. Since I put up that placard the rents have been raised: in evidence of which the leases have been sent over to me. Here they are. Since you propose to purchase you are at liberty to inspect them. For two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs the chateau and estate are yours.'

'This is Picard,' said Perrin spitefully.

The mayor affected not to hear him. Perrin went out to tell this rebuff to Raynal. He found him inspecting the barrack. He explained the matter, and excused himself, throwing the blame on the mayor, who not being a man of business allowed a placard with false figures to stand upon his wall.

'Well but,' said Raynal, 'since it turns out to be worth two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs, instead of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, all the better for me: it is only paying the odd money.'

'But where are we to get it? I would lend it you to-morrow, but to-morrow may be too late.'

'Oh! I have got another fifty thousand francs in my pocket,' said the other coolly. 'I brought all I have got; you did not seem very clear how much we should want.'