

### The Upstairs Rooms.

From the Woman's World.

When the Grahams planned the redecoration of their home, it was decided to tint the bedroom walls with water color. "It is ever so much cheaper than paper," Ellen announced in triumph as she emerged from a sea of figures, "and so dainty and clean looking."

"I really think I prefer plain walls in a sleeping room, anyway," decided Mrs. Graham, "they are so restful."

"I, too!" agreed her daughter, emphatically, counting the gilt knobs on my wall paper nearly drove me insane when I was ill last winter, and don't you remember how excited I used to get, hunting out faces in those wiggly green scrolls? Plain it shall be; but what color will you have?"

"Yellow," promptly, "I've been wanting a 'sunshine room' for years, and never could understand why the former owners papered a north room with blue."

"I'll have the 'blues' then, since you don't care for them," laughed Ellen. "My room had plenty of sun, and water color fortunately doesn't fade like paper. Let's do the spare room in lavender and cream. There's a gorgeous wistaria border in my stencil book."

"That will be lovely. And what of Bobby's room? I had thought of pink."

"Red!" corrected the 12-year-old anxiously over the top of his "jogger-phy."

"But, dear," objected his mother, "it seems to me a more delicate color would be prettier. Perhaps a pale green—"

He shook his head in vigorous dissent. "Red," he repeated firmly. "It's my favorite color."

"Of course," his mother granted hesitantly, "I want you to have what you like best in your room, but red seems so dark and heavy. How would it do to make the walls a pretty cream color and then use the red for the curtains and cushions?"

"I said red," persisted Bobby, inflexibly. "Red walls, red carpet, red—everything."

"Tell you what, Bobs," coaxed his sister, "let's compromise. We'll make a dado of the liveliest kind of red, and paint the rest of the walls a sort of greenish tan, like your khaki soldier suit. Then I'll do a standing border of wild geese—look here," and she pointed to the design in the catalog of stencils.

"What's a 'dado'?" queried the boy in a less aggressive tone, regarding the flying geese with kindling eye.

"Oh, all right," he appended, the explanation being satisfactory, "but be sure you make it the reddest red they sell."

### Ruts and How to Get Out.

Mabel Gifford Shine, in Nautlius. When you find wrinkles coming, consider your thoughts, and see what is there that is working the mischief. Is it a belief in wrinkles and old age? Is it a belief in disease and sickness? Is it care? Is it struggle—trying to live better than one can afford? Is it envy, pride, hurry, worry, excitement, fear, a bad conscience? Is it jealousy, emptiness, fault finding, impatience, suspicion? Are you thinking the worst of the best of everybody and everything? Pessimism will make wrinkles faster than care, for it goes everywhere and is present at all times.

# MARY MIDTHORNE

BY GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON.  
Author of "Graustark," "Truxton King," etc.  
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CHAPTER VII.—(Continued).

"Eric," he said at last, about weariness in his voice, "I am about to ask a great favor of you. Will you let this matter rest for awhile? I—I don't know what came over me. It was not like anything that ever has happened to me before, not in all my life. I seem to have gone utterly out of my mind. Wait! Please do not speak. Listen to me. I am about to confess something to you. When you first came to this room and said that Chetwynd had taken your drawing, I felt that you spoke the truth. I do not know why I should believe this of my own son, but—but I was no more able to help it than it was in my power to check the working of my mind. The horrible fit of anger—the dreadful language, I cannot explain. I do not understand it myself. Wait. Yes, I do understand. It was because I knew that you knew. It was because there was no one else on whom I could vent my rage and shame. I hated you, Eric, in those few moments, those awful moments. You will never know how I hated you. Perhaps you can understand why. I wanted to be proud of Chetwynd. You struck that pride a deadly blow. You were responsible for my awakening. I cried out as the flesh and blood you have nothing to fear. I present the name, I am the name. If I cast you off, the world will never pick you up. There you have it. Do I make myself clear?"

"It did not occur to Eric to resent the sudden egotism in his speech. At another time he would have snickered, perhaps, for he had a rare sense of humor, but now he could not fail to be impressed by the seriousness of his uncle's words."

"Am I to understand, Uncle Horace, that I say anything about Chetwynd stealing my—"

"Don't use that word," snapped Mr. Blagden.

"If I mention it," modified the boy, "you will kick me out?"

"Yes, sir," said Eric still in a maze. "It is not too late for me to save him. He shall not go down. By God, he shall be a man. I will lift him up, I will force him up. He shall not falter again. I have never failed in any undertaking. I will not fail in this. He must be absolved. There is no alternative. He must stand right with the world, with me, and with himself. Now, listen to me. Don't let a word escape you. I thought it all out as I lay there on the couch. You can ruin him, perhaps—or at least deprive credit on him. It is my duty to prevent that very thing happening. You have got to let this matter rest."

"But, uncle," began Eric.

Mr. Blagden came a few steps nearer. Even in the dim light Eric could see the excited light in his eyes. "There is no alternative. He must be spared, so that I may help him while my hand is strong, while my love is great and capable of generosity. I shall have to ask you to say nothing about this until I have taken root. The seed of distrust is well sown. I doubt my son. I can only hope that his side of the story may not be so dark as I fear it. There may be extenuating circumstances. A great hope took root in his soul and he voiced it. It is not improbable that you tried to profit by his ideas. You may be as culpable as he is, in an indirect way. Stop! Do not defend yourself. It isn't necessary. I am merely theorizing. I recall that the two designs, as presented, are, in general lines, the same thought is expressed. I noted a similarity. He may have been justified in keeping you from realizing on his ideas and his experience. If he discovered in any way that you, being a better draughtsman than he, could do him benefit by his ideas after coming into possession of them, either innocently or maliciously—"

Eric's indignation burst its bounds. "You know that isn't true, Uncle Horace. I cried out when I saw his design, I never talked with him about it."

"What are you going to say if he declares that you did take—?" began Mr. Blagden harshly.

But he could not deceive himself. He bit his lip and turned his face away for an instant.

"No, Eric," he went on, in an altered tone, "I won't put it that way. I am about to bare myself to you, and it is best that we should understand each other."

He paced back and forth across the room several times, his brow knitted, his hands clasped tightly behind his back.

uncle contaminated! An hour before he would not have believed it possible. But now! Where would it end? How far would an ill-wind carry that hitherto unswerving craft out of its established course? What was Horace Blagden's estimate of himself to be as time gave it a chance to develop?

As for the tall, gaunt man who strode beside him, what were his thoughts? What must they have been, to drag down his shoulders in this way and to lower a chin that never had drooped before?

They entered the gate in the stone wall guarding the sanctity of the grey house on the hill. Not until then did Horace Blagden give sign of the thoughts that were burning in his brain. He stopped, checking Eric with a word.

"It did seem to me, Eric, on seeing the two drawings, that the one bearing your name was crudely done. I could not understand it. I was amazed, and I must say I was gratified. Now I understand. You could not possibly have made the design attributed to you. But the thing that puzzles me most, is how Chetwynd, with his training and his extra preparation for the contest, could have produced such a miserable botch. He has had the best of instruction in New York. I—I can't see why he did not do better."

Eric had his own private opinion, but he could not bring himself to the point of advancing it at this time. Mr. Blagden would find out soon enough, without his help. Still, the boy could not quell the secret joy that filled his soul as he contemplated the harsh times ahead of Chetwynd, and the bitter things that his uncle and aunt would have to swallow. The thought of this actually revived his fallen spirits. The future was not so gloomy as he for the present; he could afford the gloom of today in view of tomorrow's glory.

"Perhaps he didn't consider it worth while," he explained.

Horace eyed him sharply. "If he did not consider it worth while, why should he have gone to the trouble to—But there, we were to say no more about it. He shall explain for himself. We can't judge him unheard."

They went forward. As they came into the shaft of light thrown out by the half door, a man again stopped. This time he grasped Eric's arm in a grip of iron.

"Eric," he began in a low, tense voice, "you heard me say back there in the office that I could have killed you. Will you be able to appreciate my state of mind when I tell you now that it was in my heart to kill you if you refused to accede to my demands in this matter? There is a revolver in my desk drawer. You were not to have gone out with that awful story on your lips. But that is not all. It would have died there in that room, for no one would have been alive to reveal it."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Eric, a strange chill running through him. He looked into the haggard face of his uncle as it stood out clearly in the light from the doorway. It seemed to him very old. Blagden suddenly had grown very old.

"I should have killed myself as well," said Horace Blagden quietly.

The boy stared at him in utter amazement. Suddenly it was revealed to him what all this really meant to the head of the Blagden family. He was conscious of a choking sensation in his throat; there was a rush of moisture to his eyes. A great, perhaps unwelcome wave of pity for the man swept over him.

"It's all right now, Uncle," he murmured brokenly.

As they entered the hall, Mrs. Blagden emerged from the library. She sent a swift, searching glance into Eric's eyes, a glance expressing doubt, anxiety and no little antipathy.

Eric, smiling a bitter, scornful little smile, the real awkwardness of which she never to grasp.

He could account for her uneasiness. He had but to go back for a few minutes to that second call on the telephone. She had said to him then, in accents of real despair and dread: "You are not telling him of Chetwynd and Mary, are you? You can't be sure that the dog won't betray your promise to me. If I thought you were telling him, I'd turn Mary out into the street this very minute, because I know your uncle would insist on it himself when he got home. Have you breathe it to him? Speak! Why do you hesitate?"

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