

Geraldine



CHAPTER XII—Continued.

Bellenden was now, she told herself, less than nothing to her. She could meet him on the most perfectly easy and equal footing, and so far from being dazzled by his perfection, and panting for his notice, she could now only rejoice in any opportunity which offered for discussing and perceiving her childish hero.

She had hardly hoped to have met with one at her aunt's. It had been a surprise to her when he had walked in, and still greater when he had ordered her his arm. Oh, what that order would once have meant!

Now, she had risen, as self-possessed as any woman there, and had stepped forward across the room, and down to a broad stair case, looking her prettiest, and smiling her gayest, and laughing within herself at the merry time she meant to have of it.

For she could see that he was grave and rather anxious. That meant that he would be sure to stumble on to dangerous ground presently, and then—and then she would lead him gaily on wily, wily, wily—oh, the wily wily!

Very demurely passed the first courses. Miss Campbell was engaged with her soup, her fish, the pretty flowers on the table, the heat of the evening, the forthcoming reception at the foreign embassy, the concert, she had been to in the afternoon.

Sir Frederick was quietly listening, and when he essayed responding, so far he had not afforded any sport. He did not by any means seek to engage her, as she had somehow fancied he would have done; on the contrary, he allowed long intervals to elapse without speaking at all, and when this was done upon and made use of by Geraldine's garrulous neighbor on the other side, she was provoked to find her indifferent he seemed to be toward facing up the reins again.

It is a thing he might do utterly, and this of which he at self seemed absolutely unconscious, was taken notice of by her at once, he entirely omitted the necessary civilities towards the lady on his other hand. If addressed by her, he would rouse himself with a start, as though unaware of the presence of any one else, and when he had tried to evade her, he would drop the subject. At length she gave up trying to draw him out, and Geraldine marked this also.

"I won't say I never much wonder what I'm thinking about," she said to the little girl, herself a lady.

Not perhaps Bellenden hardly knew himself. Almost from the first moment, from his first slight of her on her presentation day he had been conscious of a new feeling about this lovely girl. There had been a sort of recollection, of tenderness, an old resolve.

He would renew the old friendship, make up for the past, and make his way in the future.

Then he had been thrown back on the very threshold of the pretty estate in the air, and had found himself shut out from entering at every point. Had she been one whit less, cautious, less charming, less tantalizing, he would have turned his back and been off, smugging his shoulders but Geraldine had not, and was still playing her part to the best advantage.

She never was gentler than when she was loved, and most sought after. And, at times, now and again it had so happened that when with velvet hand she had delt the little stab, the wound which had been meant to rankle and fester presently, and had seen him turn from her to bite his lip, and flush with mingled shame and vexation, her heart had so smote her for the light, cruel stab, that she had sought him out, and set to work to undo what had been done so humbly and wistfully that for the moment he had almost been happy enough to believe anything.

For he was now in love with Geraldine, and knew it.

"It is because I know that she is as good and true as she is beautiful," he would sigh with regret all unavailing. "The woman whom I marry must be inspired by all the oily and heartlessness of this miserable world of fashion. What is it to a man that his wife knows how to dress, and dine, and parade herself from house to house, if she cares nothing for him, nor her home and children and the things that good women love? Who wants a fashion plate for his daily companion and the mother of his little ones? I am sick of seeing girls after light brought simpering out, and instructed how to dance, and chatter, and show off their points, and trot out her accomplishments. One is exactly like another. They all dot on country life, on gardening, and riding, and old women's cottages, and the next moment it slips out that there in a dreadful fright lest papa should hurry them home before the season is quite over, and that they thought it so cruel of him to stop down in the shires so long at Easter and Whitsuntide. Not one would exchange a country house with gies for Homburg, or Monte Carlo, or Brighton, or Scarborough. But I knew once a girl different to that. Bellenden would say, with animation, when with some intimate on whom such revivings had been vented, 'I knew one child she is a woman now—no, if she be not utterly changed, would make any man, any home happy. Hush! She is not for me. I should have had a poor chance, even if I meant to go in for one, I tell you. And

been following Bellenden slowly making his way up the stair case, as though impatient of his tardy progress, yet she had not spoken his name, nor told her grandmother of his proximity.

He had come straight to them directly it had been possible. Still there has been nothing definite, nothing tangible, nothing that a rival could take hold of. Mrs. Campbell had received Sir Frederick courteously, but still with something of the stately dignity lately assumed in his presence, and Geraldine had merely honored him with a casual remark or two, such as might have been made to any one. There had been no chattering, no flirting, no picking up of threads dropped at the dinner-table. He would have told himself he was a fool for his unbusiness, had it not been for what took place presently.

Bellenden had been with them for about a quarter of an hour, quietly assuming his place as one of the party in a manner he had never done before, when some acquaintance of the Raymond's had claimed Cecil's attention, and had for some minutes completely diverted it from his cousin. He had had to tell them how he came to be there, and how his "people" were not there, what they were about, where they were to be met, and where they were not to be met, and where they had to put some questions on his own account. The new-comers were great folks who he did not often chance to meet—people who seldom frequented fashionable resorts, but who would be noted wherever seen the sort of acquaintances, in short, that young Raymond approved of, and with whom he would not for the world have cut short an interview.

For full five minutes he had been thus completely engrossed, and when he had looked around at the expiry of that period neither Bellenden nor his cousin had been anywhere to be seen. "They have only gone to hear the band," Mrs. Campbell had said placidly. "I told them that I should remain here, and that you would take care of me."

How long the trains of the hand had been, he had not thought, he could not have told. It had seemed, ages, and most really have been during a considerable length of time since directly Geraldine had reappeared, it had been time to go.

Geraldine had seemed hurried and apologetic, and she had been a good deal said about the crowds, and the number of rooms, and the difficulty of making way through them, but all the taking had been done by her. Bellenden had said nothing, but had stood by with a sort of smile on his face which it had not cheered poor Cecil's heart to see.

He had, indeed, left all the excuses and explanations to his companion, but there had been that in his air which had said so plainly as words could have done, that she was herself his excuse, an one sufficient for him on any man. No wonder the son spoke sharply and unkindly to the parent who had, as it were, opened the way to some horror that Bellenden had, by some means or other, now contrived to break down the barrier which had existed for so long between him and his grandson, "little friend," and which had, up to the present, seemed so impregnable, was only too obvious.

Geraldine herself was utterly indignant with herself during the summer morn which had set in ere the party quitted the festive halls, and which, gathering strength and gory, was blazing forth in its full tide of light and heat as the weary girl sought in vain the slumber that had fled her pillow. She wondered what she had been thinking of, dreaming of, she had gone on so well until now. Never until this evening had she really talked so frankly with herself during the summer morn which had set in ere the party quitted the festive halls, and which, gathering strength and gory, was blazing forth in its full tide of light and heat as the weary girl sought in vain the slumber that had fled her pillow.

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Full of outline and fair of face, Swinging her fan with languid grace, White arms gleaming through folds of lace, A woman of forty summers.

No thread of white in the auburn hair, No line of age in the forehead fair, A life unmarred by touch of care, In spite of her forty summers.

A husband-lover and children sweet, Pleasures to charm and friends to greet, Roses scattered before her feet, Through each of her forty summers.

Summers all, for winters bold Have snatched her sunshine and made her cold; Have killed her roses and left her old; Nothing she knows but summers.

Nothing she knows of laden cloud, Of freezing air and tempests loud, Of snows that weave for Hope a shroud; Her life has been only summers.

So calm she sits in the balmy air, No sorrows to fret, no cross to bear, A summer idyl, a vision fair, This woman of forty summers.

Yet cold and blast but make us strong, After the snow the robin's song; To the fullest life by night belong The winters as well as summers.

And they whom fame shall carve in stone, The women whom men would fain enthroned, The women whom God has stamped His own, Live winters as well as summers. —Jenness Miller Monthly.

HOW THE BANK WAS ROBBED.

FIVE years ago, in a certain good-sized town in Blankshire, there lived a family whom I will call Mitchell. The family consisted of husband, wife, and two children—a boy aged 5 and a girl of 7. Mitchell was a private banker, known to be honest, respectable,

and worth a clear twenty thousand pounds. I knew little or nothing about the family until certain incidents occurred. One day his wife was fatally injured in a railway collision at a point fifty-eight miles from home. When he reached her, in response to a telegram sent by a stranger, he found she had been removed to a hotel, and was being tenderly cared for by a woman who gave her name as Mrs. A. B. Gray. She was in the train, but suffered no injury.

Mrs. Gray, I might as well tell you, was petite, good-looking, a good talker, and in a general way, captivating. The fact of her taking charge of Mrs. Mitchell as she had done proved her tender heart. She told Mr. Mitchell she had been a widow eighteen months, and was practically alone in the world, and though he was burdened with grief and anxiety he did not forget to thank her for her great kindness and to take her address. He would have offered her money for her service, but he saw that she was a lady and would feel hurt by any such action. She resumed her journey and he took his wife home to die of her injuries.

It was three weeks after her death that I came into the case. After everything was over the husband suddenly discovered that his dead wife's jewelry was missing. She had with her when the accident took place about two hundred pounds' worth of diamonds. They had disappeared, and when he came to run over events in his mind he could not remember that they had come with her. Mrs. Gray had handed to him Mrs. Mitchell's purse and a few other things, but a pair of diamond ear-drops, two rings and a pin were missing.

I was employed to proceed to the scene of the late accident and seek to trace the jewelry. The collision had occurred close to the station of a small town. People about the station and at the hotel assured me that Mrs. Mitchell had her jewelry on when taken to the hotel. The landlord's wife and the doctor who was called in were positive and when I had worked the case out I returned home to report to Mitchell that nobody but Mrs. Gray could have taken the jewelry.

He was astonished and indignant, and not only vigorously repudiated the implication, but dismissed me from the case with the assertion that I was a novice in the profession.

I went about other business, and it was about four months before I saw Mitchell again. Then he sent for me in an official capacity again. No reference was made to my previous work, but fresh troubles had come to him.

A month after the death of his wife he had opened correspondence with Mrs. Gray, and the result was that she had come to take charge of his house. He was without relatives, or, at least, without those who could aid him in his situation, and she claimed to be free in her movements. You will suspect, just as I did, that she had captivated him, but he fought shy of any acknowledgment of the sort. She was in his house, he said, to care for his children, and to manage his domestic matters, and that was no one's business but his own.

The bank owned by Mr. Mitchell was situated exactly in the rear of his private residence. The house fronted on one street and the bank on another, and there being no street between, the back garden of the house led up to the back door of the bank, and Mitchell used to come and go through the garden. In the rear of the banking rooms, divided off by the usual railing, were the private offices and vaults. A burglar alarm was connected with the front doors and windows, but none with the back.

rear, having a kennel close to the door. What the banker wanted to see me about was this. He had not only missed money from his wallet at night, but on one or two occasions considerable sums of money had been taken from a small safe which stood in his office outside the vault. One of the mysteries was in the taking of the money. He employed a teller and a bookkeeper, neither of whom had a key to the safe or vault—unless it was a duplicate made without his knowledge. Neither had the word of combination of the vault, and it seemed impossible that they could have taken the money even if so inclined. Both were perfectly honest so far as any one knew, and Mitchell was all at sea over the mystery.

He had not been talking to me five minutes when I would have declared that Mrs. Gray was the guilty party, but, of course, I did not drop a hint of my suspicions to him. When it came to my turn to ask questions I found out that he was a very sound sleeper; that he occupied a front bedroom with his son; that Mrs. Gray and the girl occupied one at the rear of his, with an entrance to both from the hall that the keys of the bank safe and vault were always kept under his pillow at night. In addition, Mrs. Gray had won the hearts of his children, if not his own, and it was only by the strongest argument that she had been induced to accept a salary of two pounds a week while occupying her position. It was as plain as daylight to me that Mitchell meant to marry her in due course of time, but it wasn't at all plain as to what sort of a scheme she was engaged upon.

I took charge of the case, told Mitchell I had a theory, and then began to study Mrs. Gray. I found her to be a sweet and innocent-looking little woman, seemingly devoted to the children. As it was summer time she was out a great deal, and I determined to follow her. It seemed to be time thrown away, however.

I had been engaged a month on the case, and made no discovery, when the outside safe was robbed again. A deposit of some deeds had come in at the last moment, and had been placed there for the night. The whole lot amounted to about two hundred pounds, and deeds and bank notes were missing next morning. The safe had not only been opened with a key but the bank had been entered by unlocking the back door. No one could have entered by the front without sounding an alarm. No stranger could have entered by the back on account of the dog, who was wide awake and on the alert.

When Mitchell sent for me to give me the news I was perfectly satisfied that Mrs. Gray was the guilty party. I believed she had the nerve to enter his room in the night, secure the keys, and then slip through the back garden, enter the bank, and open the safe. When I learned that the dog was a great favorite of hers, this belief was a certainty. I couldn't, for reasons already given, say a word to Mitchell about this. He wanted to suspect his two employes, but when we had discussed the matter he was made to see that it was altogether unlikely that either of them was guilty. Indeed, he was alone in the bank when the deeds and money came in, and he alone knew where the deposit was placed.

After this I turned to Mrs. Gray again, and in about a week something happened to prove that I was on the right track.

One of the tram-car lines of the town ran down to the railway station. It was Mrs. Gray's habit of an afternoon to ride on this line with the little girl as far as the town park, and to sit near a fountain and read, while the girl romped about with other children.

On the third afternoon after the robbery, she occupied her usual seat for an hour without anything happening. I sat on a bench behind her, about thirty feet away, and by-and-by I observed that she was writing a note with a pencil. She did it so deftly that one sitting in front of her could not have guessed what she was doing. Beside her was a large, shady tree, and as near as I could make out she disposed of the note when folded up somewhere about the tree.

When she left I followed her for a short distance, and looking back I saw a young and well-dressed man occupying the place vacated by her. An hour later, when I was able to examine the tree, I found a hollow in the trunk just on a line with her shoulder as she sat on the seat.

My theory was that she had an accomplice—the young man whom I had seen. The hollow in the tree was his post-hole.

Next day I was at the park half an hour before her usual time, and behold! the young man was occupying the bench. As she appeared he got up and took a seat a hundred feet away, and by watching closely I saw that she took a note from the tree. Before leaving she wrote one in reply, and after she had gone I saw him remove it.

I was now certain I was on the right track, and went to Mitchell to secure some particulars I wished to know. I told him I had a clue, but would not reveal which way it led. I learned from him that the combination of the vault door had four numbers, and he alone knew it. It had been changed about a month after Mrs. Gray's arrival, and he hesitatingly owned that the word was "Aimee," which was her Christian name. He would not, however, admit that this fact was known to her.

For two weeks after securing this information I hardly ever saw Mrs. Gray. For some reason she remained at home. By dint of inquiry I discovered from Mitchell that the money needed to pay the men at a coal mine and also at a large factory was deposited with him on the fourteenth of every month. It was simply passed to him to be locked in the vault over night, as it came from London by messenger. I reasoned that Mrs. Gray

would get this information out of him in some way or that her accomplice would discover it, and that she would probably make an attempt to rob the bank on the night of the fourteenth.

On the twelfth day of August she exchanged notes at the park, also on the thirteenth. On this latter date I shadowed the young man for three hours. Among the things he did was to go to the station and inquire about various night trains, and particularly one which passed along the line half an hour after midnight.

I promised Mitchell that a climax would soon be reached, and then staked my all on what might happen on the night of the fourteenth.

At 8 o'clock of that evening I threw a piece of "dosed" meat to his dog from a neighboring garden, and at 10 I softly climbed the fence, to find the canine in his kennel, and fit enough to remain there. I lay down within ten feet of him, behind a bush, and it was an hour and a half before anything happened.

Everybody was in bed by that time, and I was not greatly surprised when a female figure, which I guessed to be Mrs. Gray, passed within five feet of me, going toward the bank.

She stopped at the kennel to speak to the dog, then opened the back door and entered.

I did not move from my hiding place until she reappeared, about twenty minutes after. She carefully locked the bank, and as she passed me on her way to the house I followed quickly. The key she laid on the back steps, softly opened the side gate, and I let her reach the street before I brought matters to a climax.

She had only just got out of the gate when she was joined by a man, but when I rushed to seize them he became alarmed, and was off before I could seize him. I detained the woman, however, and found she had a bundle under her arm, which I took charge of—a bundle containing about three thousand pounds in notes.

What a fearless woman she was. She simply laughed as I led her up the steps and rang the bell to arouse Mitchell, and when I had told him all, and gave him the money and the keys to prove the robbery, she just smiled, and said:

"Well, what of it?"

"The 'What of it?' astounded me, Mitchell, however, resolved not to let the public know that his bank could be so easily robbed, nor would he have society know that he had been duped by an adventuress, so, after a consultation, he actually gave the woman fifty pounds in each of three bills, which she speedily did—Yankee Blade.

Poor, but rich.

Once in New England, says a writer in the Outlook, I was driving with an old farmer, and some of the men of the neighborhood came under criticism. Speaking of a prominent man in the village, I asked:

"He is a man of means?"

"Well, sir," the farmer replied, "he ain't got much money, but he's a mighty rich man."

"He has a great deal of land, then?" I asked.

"No, sir, he ain't got much land, neither, but still he is mighty rich."

The old farmer, with a pleased smile, observed my puzzled look for a moment and then said:

"You see, he ain't got much money, and he ain't got much land, but still he is rich, because he never went to bed owing any man a cent in all his life. He lives as well as he wants to live, and he pays as he goes; he doesn't owe anything and he ain't afraid of anybody; he tells every man the truth, and does his duty by himself, his family and his neighbors, his word is as good as a bond, and every man, woman and child in the town looks up to him and respects him. No, sir, he ain't got much money, and he ain't got much land, but still he is a mighty rich man, because he's got all he needs and all he wants."

I assented to the old man's deductions, for I thought them entirely correct. When a man has all he needs and all he wants he is certainly rich, and when he wants these things he is certainly poor.

An Electrically Heated Quilt.

A new invention, called by its inventor the thermogen, consists of a quilt containing a coil of wire bent in the fashion of a gridiron, inclosed in insulating and non-conducting material, and embedded in cotton-wool or some other soft substance with a silk or woolen covering. The resistance offered by the coil to the flow of an electric current through the wire produces heat in the same way that heat and eventually light are produced in the filament of the glow lamp. A uniform temperature of about one hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit is thus maintained, but in the event of the temperature rising beyond that point from increase of pressure in electric mains, a fuse instantly melts and automatically shuts off the current.

The quilt may be readily attached to ordinary incandescent lamp terminals. In describing this device London Lancet says that the most important medical use of such an invention would be on the operating table, where, in lengthened operations or in those attended with hemorrhages, whose artificial means to sustain the patient's temperature are required, blankets and hot water are a decided nuisance. In such cases this quilt would be invaluable as a soft, dry, warm and convenient covering. Again, in cases of chronic rheumatism, lumbago, or senile lowness of circulation, such an appliance would be useful. The thermogen is now receiving trial at several large English hospitals.

An Expensive Gown.

The Empress Josephine once paid \$2,000 for a dress and so angered the Emperor that he ordered the dressmaker to be sent to prison.