The Filigree Ball

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,

Author of "The Mystery of Agatha Webb," "Lost Man's Lane," Etc.

Copyright, 1903, by the Bobbs-Merrill Company

"Do you know," I sententiously informed him, "I have a wonderful interest in that old hearthstone, or, rather, in the seemingly innocent engraving hanging over it of Benjamin Franklin at the court of France. I tell you frankly that I had no idea of what would be found behind the picture."

I saw by his quick look that I had stirred up a hornets' nest. This was just what I had calculated to do.

"Behind it!" he repeated. "There is nothing behind it."

I laughed, shrugged my shoulders and backed slowly toward the door.

"Of course you should know," I retorted, with some condescension. Then as if struck by a sudden remembrance: "Oh, by the way, have you been told that there is a window on that floor which does not stay fastened? I speak of it that you may have it repaired as soon as the police vacate. It's the last one in the hall leading to the negro quarters. If you shake it hard enough, the catch falls back, and any one can raise it even from the outside."

"I will see to it," he replied, dropping his eyes, possibly to hide their curious twinkle. "But what do you mean about finding something in the wall behind that old picture? I've never heard"—

But, though he spoke quickly and shouted the last words after me at the top of his voice, I was by this time too far away to respond save by a dubious smile and a semipatronizing wave of the hand. Not until I was nearly out of earshot did I venture to shout back the following words:

"I'll be back in an hour. If anything happens, if the boys annoy you or any one attempts to enter the old house, telephone to the station or summon the officer at the corner. I don't believe any harm will come from leaving the place to itself for awhile." Then I walked around the block.

When I arrived in front again it was quite dark. So was the house, but there was light in the library. I felt assured that I should find Uncle David there, and I did. When after a noiseless entrance and a careful advance through the hall I threw open the door beyond the gilded pillars it was to see the tall figure of this old man mounted upon the chair I had left there peering up at the nail from which I had so lately lifted the picture. He started as I presented myself and almost fell from the chair. But careless laugh I uttered assured him of the little importance I placed upon this evidence of his daring and unappeasable curiosity, and he confronted me with an enviable air of dignity, whereupon I managed to say:

"Really, Mr. Moore, I'm glad to see you here. It is quite natural for you to wish to learn by any means in your power what that picture concealed. I came back because I suddenly remembered that I had forgotten to rehang it."

Involuntarily he glanced again at the wall overhead, which was as bare as his hand save for the nail he had already examined.

"It has concealed nothing," he retorted. "You can see yourself that the wall is bare and that it rings as sound as any chimney piece ever made." Here he struck it heavily with his fist. "What did you imagine that you had found?"

I smiled, shrugged my shoulders in tantalizing repetition of my former action upon a like occasion and then answered brusquely:

"I did not come back to betray police secrets, but to restore this picture to its place. Or perhaps you prefer to have it down rather than up? It isn't much of an ornament."

He scrutinized me darkly from over his shoulder, a wary gleam showing itself in his shrewd old eyes, and the idea crossed me that the moment might possess more significance than appeared. But I did not step backward nor give evidence in any way that I had even thought of danger. I simply laid my hand on the picture and looked up at him for orders.

He promptly signified that he wished it hung, adding as I hesitated these words: "The pictures in this house are supposed to stay on the walls where they belong. There is a traditional superstition against removing them."

I immediately lifted the print from the floor. No doubt he had me at a disadvantage, if evil was in his heart, and my position on the hearth was as dangerous as previous events had proved it to be. But it would not do to show the white feather at a moment when his fate, if not my own, hung in the balance; so, motioning him to step down, I put foot on the chair and raised the picture aloft to hang it. As I did so he moved over to the huge settle of his ancestors and, crossing his arms over its back, surveyed me with a smile I rather imagined than saw.

Suddenly, as I strained to put the cord over the nail, he called out:

"Look out! You'll fall!"

If he had intended to give me a start in payment for my previous rebuff he did not succeed, for my nerves had grown steady and my arm firm at the glimpse I had caught of the shelf below me. The fine brown powder I had scattered there had been displaced in five distinct spots, and not by my fingers. I had preferred to risk the loss of my balance rather than rest my hand on the shelf, but he had taken no such precaution. The clew I so anxiously desired and for which I had so recklessly worked was obtained.

But when, half an hour later, I found an opportunity of measuring these marks and comparing them with those upstairs I did not enjoy the full triumph I had promised myself, for the two impressions utterly failed to coincide, thus proving that whoever the person was who had been in this house with Mrs. Jeffrey on the evening she died it was not her Uncle David.

CHAPTER VIII.

LET me repeat. The person who had left the marks of his presence in the upper chamber of the Moore house was not the man popularly known as Uncle David. Who, then, had it been? But one name suggested itself to me—Mr. Jeffrey.

It was not so easy for me to reach this man as it had been for me to reach his singular and unimaginative uncle. In the first place, his door had been closed to every one since his wife's death. Neither friends nor strangers could gain admittance there unless they came vested with authority from the coroner. And this, even if I could manage to obtain it, would not answer in my case. What I had to say and do would better follow a chance encounter. But no chance encounter with this gentleman seemed likely to fall to my lot, and finally I swallowed my pride and asked another favor of the lieutenant. Would he see that I was given an opportunity for carrying some message or of doing some errand which would lead to my having an interview with Mr. Jeffrey? If he would I stood ready to promise that my curiosity should stop at this point and that I would cease to make a nuisance of myself.

I think he suspected me by this time, but he made no remark, and in a day or so I was summoned to carry a note to the house in K street.

Mrs. Jeffrey's funeral had taken place the day before, and the house looked deserted. But my summons speedily brought to the door a neat looking but very nervous maid, whose eyes took on an unmistakable expression of resistance when I announced my errand and asked to see Mr. Jeffrey. The expression would not have struck me as peculiar if she had raised any objection to the interview I had solicited. But she did not. Her fear and antipathy consequently sprang from some other source than her in-

Loretta, the Jeffreys' maid

terest in the man most threatened by my visit. Was it, could it be, on her own account? Recalling what I had heard whispered about the station concerning a maid of the Jeffreys who always seemed on the point of saying something which never really left her lips, I stopped her as she was about to slip upstairs and quietly asked:

"Are you Loretta?"

The way she turned, the way she looked at me, as she gave me a short affirmative and then quickly proceeded on her way, convinced me that my colleagues were right as to her being a woman who had some cause for dreading police interference. I instantly made up my mind that here was a mine to be worked and that I knew just the demure little soul best equipped to act the part of miner.

In a moment she came back, and I had a chance to note again her pretty but expressionless features, among which the restless eyes alone bespoke character or decision.

"Mr. Jeffrey is in the back room upstairs," she announced. "He says for you to come up."

"Is it the room Mrs. Jeffrey used to occupy?" I asked, with open curiosity, as I passed her.

An involuntary shudder proved that she was not without feeling. So did the quick disclaimer:

"No, no! Those rooms are closed. He occupies the one Miss Tuttle had before she went away."

"Oh, then, Miss Tuttle is gone?"

Loretta disdained to answer. She had already said enough to cause her to bite her lip as she disappeared down the basement stair. Decidedly the boys were right. An uneasy feeling followed any conversation with this girl. Yet, while there was slyness in her manner, there was a certain frank honesty visible in it, too, which caused me to think that if she could ever be made to speak her evidence could be relied on.

Mr. Jeffrey was sitting with his back to the door when I entered, but turned as I spoke his name and held out his hand for the note I carried. He appeared to shrink from observation and shifted uneasily as long as I stood in front of him, though he said nothing and did not lift his eyes from the letter he was perusing till he heard me step back to the door I had purposely left open and softly closed it. Then he glanced up with a keen if not an alarmed look, which seemed an exaggerated one for the occasion—that is, if he had no secret to keep.

"Do you suffer so from drafts?" he asked, rising in a way which in itself was a dismissal.

I smiled an amused denial, then, with the simple directness I thought most likely to win me his confidence, entered straight upon my business in these plain words:

"Pardon me, Mr. Jeffrey, I have something to say which is not exactly fitted for the ears of servants." Then as he pushed his chair suddenly back I added reassuringly: "It is not a police matter, sir, but an entirely personal one. It may strike you as important, and it may not. Mr. Jeffrey, I was the man who made the unhappy discovery in the Moore mansion which has plunged this house into mourning."

This announcement startled him and produced a visible change in his manner. His eyes flew first to one door and then to another, as if it were he who feared intrusion now.

"I beg your pardon for speaking on so painful a topic," I went on as soon as I saw he was ready to listen to me. "My excuse is that I came upon a little thing that same night which I have

Securing an imprint of Jeffrey's hand

not thought of sufficient importance to mention to any one else, but which it may interest you to hear about."

Here I took from a book I held a piece of blotting paper. It was white on one side and blue on the other. The white side I had thickly chalked, though this was not apparent. Laying down this piece of blotting paper, chalked side up, on the end of a large table near which we were standing, I took out an envelope from my pocket and, shaking it gently to and fro, remarked:

"In an upper room of the Moore house—you remember the southwest chamber, sir?"

Ah, didn't he! There was no misdoubting the quick emotion—the shrinking and the alarm with which he heard this room mentioned.

"It was in that room that I found these."

Tipping up the envelope, I scattered over the face of the blotter a few of the glistening particles I had collected from the place mentioned.

He bent over them, astonished; then, as was natural, brushed them together in a heap with the tips of his fingers and leaned to look again just as I breathed a heavy sigh which scattered them far and wide.

Instinctively he withdrew his hand, whereupon I embraced the opportunity of turning the blotter over, uttering meanwhile the most profuse apologies. Then, as if anxious not to repeat my misadventure, I let the blotter lie where it was, and, pouring out the few remaining particles into my palm, I held them toward the light in such a way that he was compelled to lean across the table in order to see them. Naturally, for I had planned the distance well, his finger tips, white with the chalk he had unconsciously handled, touched the blue surface of the blotter now lying uppermost and left their marks there.

I could have shouted in my elation at the success of this risky maneuver but managed to suppress my emotion and to stand quite still while he took a good look at the filings. They seemed to have great and unusual interest for him, and it was with no ordinary emotion that he finally asked:

"What do you make out of these, and why do you bring them here?"

My answer was written under his hand, but this it was far from my policy to impart. So, putting on my friendliest air, I returned, with suitable respect:

"I don't know what to make of them. They look like gold, but that is for you to decide. Do you want them, sir?"

"No," he replied, starting erect and withdrawing his hand from the blotter. "It's but a trifle—not worth our attention. But I thank you just the same for bringing it to my notice."

And again his manner became a plain dismissal.

This time I accepted it as such without question. Carelessly restoring the piece of blotting paper to the book from which I had taken it, I made a bow and withdrew toward the door. He seemed to be thinking, and the deep furrows which I am sure had been lacking from his brow a week previous became startlingly visible. Finally he observed:

"Mrs. Jeffrey was not in her right mind when she so unhappily took her life. I see now that the change in her dates back to her wedding day; consequently any little peculiarity she may have shown at that time is not to be wondered at."

"Certainly not," I boldly ventured, "if such peculiarities were shown after the fright given her by the catastrophe which took place in the library."

His eyes, which were fixed on mine, flashed, and his hands closed convulsively.

"We will not consider the subject," he muttered, reseating himself in the chair from which he had risen.

I bowed again and went out. I did not dwell on the interview in my own mind, nor did I allow myself to draw any conclusions from it till I had carried the blotter into the southwest chamber of the Moore house and carefully compared the impressions made on it with the marks I had scratched on the surface of the mantelshelf. This I did by laying the one over the other after having made holes where his finger tips had touched the blotter.

The holes in the blotter and the marks outlined upon the shelf coincided exactly.

CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE already mentioned the man whom I secretly looked upon as standing between me and all preferment. He was a good looking fellow, but he wore a natural sneer which for some reason I felt to be always directed toward myself. This sneer grew pronounced about this time and that was the reason, no doubt, why I continued to work as long as I did in secret. I dreaded the open laugh of this man, a laugh which always seemed hovering on his lips and which was only held in restraint by the awe we all felt of the major.

Notwithstanding, I made one slight move. Encountering the deputy coroner, I ventured to ask if he was quite satisfied with the evidence collected in the Jeffrey case.

His surprise did not prevent him from asking my reasons for this question.

I replied to this effect:

"Because I have a little friend winsome enough and subtle enough to worm the truth out of the devil. I hear that the girl Loretta is suspected of knowing more about this unfortunate tragedy than she is willing to impart. If you wish this little friend of mine to talk to her I will see that she does so and does so with effect."

The deputy coroner looked interested.

"Whom do you mean by 'little friend,' and what is her name?"

"I will send her to you."

And I did.

The next day I was standing on the corner of Vermont avenue when I saw Jinny advancing from the house in K street. She was chipper, and she was smiling in a way which made me say to myself:

"It is fortunate that Durbin is not here."

For Jinny's one weakness is her lack of power to hide the satisfaction she takes in any detective work that comes her way. I had told her of this and had more than once tried to impress upon her that her smile was a complete give away, but I noticed that if she kept it from her lips it forced its way

The deputy coroner is interested

out of her eyes, and if she kept it out of her eyes it beamed like an inner radiance from her whole face. So I gave up the task of making her perfect and let her go on smiling, glad that she had such frequent cause for it.

This morning her smile had a touch of pride in it as well as of delight, and, noting this, I remarked:

"You have made Loretta talk."

Her head went up, and a demure dimple appeared in her cheek.

"What did she say?" I urged. "What has she been keeping back?"

(To be continued.)

Public Sale.

The undeasigned will sell at Public Auction at his place in Goodrich twp., section 28, three miles north-west of Denison and 1 mile east from the Three Mile House on

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1905,

Commencing at 10 o'clock, the following property:

Seven good work horses, one span mules, 55 head of cattle, 20 brood sows, Milwaukee self-binder, new McCormick grass mower, two corn planters with 180 rods wire, seeder, with grass seed attachment, pulverizer, three lumber wagons, one nearly new, weeder, hay rake, a new-two hole self-feed corn sheller, with four-horse power, one hand corn sheller, three section harrow, three corn plows, corn stalk cutter, Rock Island riding plow, two hay racks, two hog racks, bob-sled, four seed harness, four sets fly nets, saddle, top buggy, galvenized water tank, feed grinder, 2000 bu. corn in crib, 600 bu. seed oats, ten to fifteen tons timothy hay, 15 bu seed corn, 10 doz chickens, new piano, parlor furniture, two cook stoves, heating stove, all house and kitchen furniture and many other articles.

FREE LUNCH AT NOON

Terms as usual.

FRITZ BOETTGER.

W. J. McAHREN, Auct. 8-2t.

J. H. WALKER

ATTORNEY AT LAW,

Real Estate and Collections

OFFICE OVER POSTOFFICE.

Want to Trade

Your City Property for a good Farm?

Want to Trade

That Stock of Goods for a good farm?

COME AND SEE US ABOUT THAT FINE HALF SECTION IOWA FARM WE CAN TRADE YOU. CAN GET POSSESSION FOR 1905 IF WANTED

E. GULICK, MGR.

Crawford County Real Estate Exchange

L. M. SHAW, PRES. C. F. KUEHNLE, V-PRES. C. L. VOSS CASH.

BANK OF DENISON.

General Bankiug Business Conducted.

Exchange Bought and Sold. Long and Short Time Loans at Lowest Rates

Interest Paid on Time Deposits.

Accounts of all Branches of Business Conducted

Personal attention given to investments for local patrons. Business Conducted in English or German.

SHAW, SIMS & KUEHNLE.

LAWYERS.

Real Estate Loans at Lowest Rates.

SEE HERE

WE have on hand a nice lot of Fence Posts and Poles. Also small Piling; Hog Wire Fence, a car of the very best cement on the market, all kinds of shingles and building materials at bed-rock prices.

Call and see us before purchasing elsewhere. At the old Stone & Temple stand.

W. R. TEMPLE CO.

Capital $100,000. Deposits $450,000.

Crawford County State Bank,

The Best Security for Depositors — DENISON, IOWA. — Farm Loans at Fiv Per Cent Interes

This Bank is incorporated under the laws of the State of Iowa. This gives the best security to all depositors, not only to the amount of stock, but the personal property of each share holder is holden to the amount of his share to any ess to the bank. Incorporated banks are under the control of the State Auditor, who can at any time examine the business, and according to his investigation the published statements are made. Depositors in an incorporated bank have more security than the confidence imposed in the offices. They have the best security, because the capital stock can not be used at pleasure for outside speculation and investment. The Crawford County State Bank is the best incorporated banking institution in the county. A general banking business done.

Passage Tickts Sold. Insurance Written. Loans Negotiated.

L. CORNWELL, President. GEO. NAEVE, V-Pres. M. E. JONES, Cashier. C. J. KEMMING, Ass't Cashier.

Directors.—L Cornwell, Geo Naeve, H F Schwartz, Chas Tabor, J P Conner.

A Few Crawford Co. Farms & City Property for Sale.

10 improved 80 acre farms from 2 to 5 miles from good towns.
2 " 40 " " " 1 " 2 " " " "
4 " 120 " " " 1 " 5 " " " "
8 " 160 " " " 2 " 5 " " " "
3 " 240 " " " 1 " 4 " " " "

One 180 acre farm, one 280 acre farm and one 200 acres highly improved.

FOR EXCHANGE--for smaller farm, 200 acres, 180 acres, 160 acres. Also a 9 room modern residence for small farm, 40 or 80 acres.

RESIDENCE PROPERTY--I have over 25 good residences, from 3 rooms to 9 rooms, with from 1 lot to 5 acre lot, and from $800 to $3,000.

VACANT LOTS--I have about 50 lots for sale, in tracts of from 1 lot to 10 lots, in east Denison, west Denison, north Denison, south Denison and College addition.

IF YOU WANT--to Buy, Sell or Exchange your property no matter where located, it will pay you to see me. Call on or write

Review Office. JOHN ROLLINS, Denison, IOwa.

MY WORK SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

JOHN FASTJE,

CABINET WORK OF ALL KINDS.

STORE SHELVING, OFFICE FIXTURES, ETC. ETC.

PRICES ON APPLICATION AND WORK GUARANTEED.