

The Filigree Ball

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,

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

Copyright, 1902, by the Bobbs-Merrill Company

behavior both then and afterward?

The hour usually given by brides to dress and gladsome expectation was with her one of farewell to past hopes and an unfortunate if not passionate attachment. No wonder that she wished to be alone. No wonder that interruption angered her. Perhaps it had found her on her knees. Perhaps—Here I felt myself seized by a strong and sudden excitement. I remembered the filigree I had gathered up from the small stand by the window, filigree which had glittered and which must have been of gold. What was the conclusion? In this last hour of her maiden life she had sought to rid herself of some article of jewelry which she found it undesirable to carry into her new life. What article of jewelry? In consideration of the circumstances and the hour I could think of but one—a ring, the symbol of some old attachment.

The slight abrasion at the base of her third finger, which had been looked upon as the result of too rough and speedy a withdrawing of the wedding ring on the evening of her death, was much more likely to have been occasioned by the reopening of some little wound made two weeks before by the file. If Durbin and the rest had taken into account these filigree, they must have come to very much the same conclusion, but either they had overlooked them in their search about the place or, having noted them, regarded them as a clue leading nowhere.

But for me they led the way to a very definite inquiry. Asking to see the rings Mrs. Jeffrey had left behind her on the night she went for the last time to the Moore house, I looked them carefully over and found that none of them showed the least mark of the file. This strengthened my theory, and I proceeded to take my next step with increased confidence. It seemed an easy one, but proved unexpectedly difficult. My desire was to ascertain whether she had worn previous to her marriage any rings which had not been seen on her finger since, and it took me one whole week to establish the fact that she had.

But that fact once learned, the way cleared before me. Allowing my fancy full rein, I pictured to myself her anxious figure standing alone in that ancient and ghostly room filling off this old ring from her dainty finger. Then I asked myself what she would be likely to do with this ring after disengaging it from her hand? Would she keep it? Perhaps. But if so, why would it not be found? None such had been discovered among her effects. Or had she thrown it away, and if so, where? The vision of her which I had just seen in my mind's eye came out with a clearness at this, which struck me as providential. I could discern as plainly as if I had been a part of the scene the white clad form of the bride bending toward the light which came in sparsely through the half open shutter she had loosened for this task. This was the shutter which had never again been fastened and whose restless blowing to and fro had first led attention to this house and the crime it might otherwise have concealed indefinitely. Had some glimpse of the rank grass growing underneath this window lured her eye and led her to cast away the ring which she had no longer any right to keep? It would be like a woman to yield to such an impulse, and on the strength of the possibility I decided to search this small plot for what it might very reasonably conceal.

Calling together a posse of street urchins, I organized them into a band, with the promise of a good supper all around if one of them brought me the pieces of a broken ring which I had lost in the grass plot of a house where I had been called upon to stay all night. That they might win the supper in the shortest possible time and before the owner of this house, who lived opposite, could interfere, I advised them to start at the fence in a long line and, proceeding on their knees, to search, each one, the ground before him to the width of his own body. The fortunate one was to have the privilege of saying what the supper should consist of. To give a plausible excuse for this search a ball was to be tossed up and down the street till it lighted in the Moore house enclosure.

I did not accompany them. Jinny, who has such an innocent air on the street, took my arm and promenaded up and down the block just to see that Mr. Moore did not make too much trouble. And it was well she did so, for though he was not at home—I had chosen the hour of his afternoon ride—his new manservant was, and he no sooner perceived this crowd of urchins making for the opposite house than he rushed at them and would have scattered them far and wide in a twinkling if the demure dimples of my little ally had not come into play and distracted his attention so completely as to make him forget the throng of unkempt hoodlums who seemed bound to invade his master's property. She was looking for Mr. Moore's house, she told him. Did he know Mr. Moore and his house, which was somewhere near, not his new, great, big house, where the horrible things took place of which

she had read in the papers, but his little old house, which she had heard was soon to be for rent and which she thought would be just the right size for herself and mother. Was that it? That dear little place all smothered in vines? How lovely! And what would the rent be, did he think, and had it a back yard with garden room enough for her to raise plinks and nasturtiums, and so on, and so on, while he stared with delighted eyes and tried to put in a word edgewise, and the boys—well, they went through that strip of grass in just ten minutes. My brave little

The finding of the ring



Jinny had just declared with her most roguish smile that she would run home and tell her mother all about this sweetest of sweet little places when a shout rose from the other side of the street, and that collection of fifteen or twenty boys scampered away as if mad, shouting in joyous echo of the boy at their head:

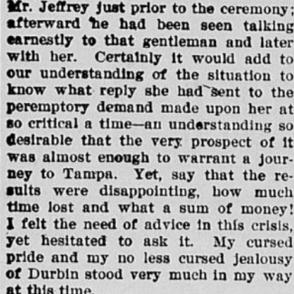
"It's to be chicken, heaping plates of ice cream and sponge cake."

By which token she knew that the ring had been found.

When they brought this ring to me I would not have exchanged places with any man on earth. As Jinny herself was curious enough to stroll along about this time, I held it out where we both could see it and draw our conclusions.

It was a plain gold circlet set with a single small ruby. It was cut through and twisted out of shape just as I had anticipated. How could I learn the story of that ring and the possible connection between it and Mr. Jeffrey's professed jealousy of his wife and the disappointing honeymoon which had followed their marriage? That this feeling on his part had antedated the ambassador's ball no one could question, but that it had started as far back as the wedding day was a new idea to me, and one which suggested many possibilities. Could this idea be established, and if so how? But one avenue of inquiry offered itself. The waiter, who had been split away so curiously immediately after the wedding, might be able to give us some information on this interesting point. He had been the medium of the messages

Jeffrey sees Miss Tuttle from his window



which had passed between her and Mr. Jeffrey just prior to the ceremony; afterward he had been seen talking earnestly to that gentleman and later with her. Certainly it would add to our understanding of the situation to know what reply she had sent to the peremptory demand made upon her at so critical a time—an understanding so desirable that the very prospect of it was almost enough to warrant a journey to Tampa. Yet, say that the results were disappointing, how much time lost and what a sum of money! I felt the need of advice in this crisis, yet hesitated to ask it. My cursed pride and my no less cursed jealousy of Durbin stood very much in my way at this time.

A week had now passed since the inquiry, and while Miss Tuttle still remained at liberty it was a circumscribed liberty which must have been very galling to one of her temperament and habits. She rode and she walked, but she entered no house unattended nor was she allowed any communication with Mr. Jeffrey. Nevertheless she saw him or at least gave him the opportunity of seeing her. Each day at 3 o'clock she rode through K street, and the detective who watched Mr. Jeffrey's house said that she never passed it without turning her face to the second story window, where he invariably stood. No signs passed between them—indeed they scarcely nodded—but her face as she lifted it to meet his eye showed so marked a se-

renity and was so altogether beautiful that this same detective had a desire to see if it maintained like characteristics when she was not within reach of her brother-in-law. Accordingly the next day he delegated his place to another and took his stand farther down the street. Alas, it was not the same woman's face he saw, but a far different and sadder one. She wore that look of courage and brave hope only in passing Mr. Jeffrey's house. Was it simply an expression of her secret devotion to him, or the signal of some compact which had been entered into between them?

Whichever it was, it touched my heart even in his description of it. After advising with Jinny, I approached the superintendent, to whom without further reserve I opened my heart.

The next day I found myself on the train bound for Tampa, with full authority to follow Curly Jim until I found him.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN I started on this desperate search after a witness, war had been declared, but no advance as yet ordered on Cuba. I wandered from one end of the camp to the other till I finally encountered a petty officer who gave signs of being a rough rider. Him I stopped and, with some hint of my business, asked where James Calvert could be found.

His answer was a stare and a gesture toward the hospital tents. Nothing could have astonished me more.

"Sick?" I cried.

"Dying," was his answer. Dying! Curly Jim! Impossible! I had misled my informant as to the exact man I wanted, or else there were two James Calverts in Tampa. Curly Jim, the former cowboy, was not the fellow to succumb in camp before he had ever smelt powder.

"It is James Calvert of the First Volunteer corps I am after," said I. "A sturdy fellow?"

"No doubt, no doubt. Many sturdy fellows are down. He's down to stay. Typhoid, you know. Bad case. No hope from the start. Pity, but—"

I heard no more. Dying! Curly Jim! He who was considered to be immune. He who held the secret—

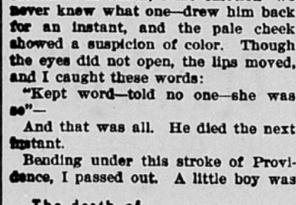
"Let me see him," I demanded. "It is important—a police matter. A word from him may save a life. He is still breathing?"

"Yes, but I do not think there is any chance of his speaking. He did not recognize his nurse five minutes ago."

As bad as that! But I did not despair. I did not dare to. I had staked everything on this interview, and I was not going to lose its promised results from any lack of effort on my own part.

"Let me see him," I repeated. "I was taken in. The few persons I saw clustered about a narrow cot in one corner gave way, and I was cut

The petty officer



to the heart to see that they did this not so much out of consideration for me or my errand there as from the consciousness that their business at the bedside of this dying man was over. He was on the point of breathing his last. I pressed forward, and after one quick scrutiny of the closed eyes and pale face I knelt at his side and whispered a name into his ear. It was that of Veronica Moore.

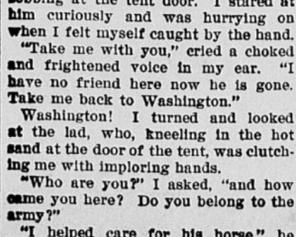
He started. They all saw it. On the threshold of death, some emotion—never knew what one—drew him back for an instant, and the pale cheek showed a suspicion of color. Though the eyes did not open, the lips moved, and I caught these words:

"Kept word—told no one—she was so—"

And that was all. He died the next instant.

Bending under this stroke of Providence, I passed out. A little boy was

The death of Curly Jim



sobbing at the tent door. I stared at him curiously and was hurrying on when I felt myself caught by the hand. "Take me with you," cried a choked and frightened voice in my ear. "I have no friend here now he is gone. Take me back to Washington."

Washington! I turned and looked at the lad, who, kneeling in the hot sand at the door of the tent, was clutching me with imploring hands.

"Who are you?" I asked, "and how came you here? Do you belong to the army?"

"I helped care for his horse," he

whispered. "He found me smuggled on board the train—for I was bound to go to war—and he was sorry for me and used to give me bits of his own rations, but—but now no one will give me anything. Take me back; she won't care. She's dead, they say. Besides, I wouldn't stay here now if she was alive and breathing. I have had enough of war since he— Oh, he was good to me—I never cared for any one so much."

I looked at the boy with an odd sensation for which I have no name.

"Whom are you talking about?" I asked. "Your mother—your sister?"

"Oh, no!" The tone was simplicity itself. "Never had no mother. I mean the lady at the big house; the one that was married. She gave me money to go out of Washington, and wanting to be a soldier, I followed Curly Jim. I didn't think he'd die; he looked so strong— What's the matter, sir? Have I said anything I shouldn't?"

I had him by the arm. I fear that I was shaking him.

"The lady?" I repeated. "She who was married—who gave you money. Wasn't it Mrs. Jeffrey?"

"Yes, I believe that was the name of the man she married. I didn't know him, but I saw her—"

"Where? And why did she give you money? I will take you home with me if you tell me the truth about it."

He glanced back at the tent from which I had slightly drawn him and a hungry look crept into his eyes.

"Well, it's no secret now," he muttered. "He used to say I must keep my mouth shut, but he wouldn't say so now if he knew I could get home by telling. He used to be sorry for me, he used. What do you want to know?"

"Why Mrs. Jeffrey gave you money to leave Washington?"

The boy trembled, drew a step away and then came back, and under those hot Florida skies in the turmoil of departing troops I heard these words:

"Because I heard what she said to Jim."

I felt my heart go down, then up, up, beyond anything I had ever experienced in my whole life. The way before me was not closed then. A witness yet remained, though Jim was dead. The boy was oblivious of my emotion. He was staring with great mournfulness at the tent.

"And what was that?" said I.

His attention, which had been wandering, came back, and it was with some surprise he said:

"It was not much. She told him to take the gentleman into the library. But it was the library where men died, and he just went and died there, too, you remember, and Jim said he wasn't ever going to speak of it, and so I promised not to neither, but—but—when do you think you will be starting, sir?"

I did not answer him. I was feeling very queer, as men feel, I suppose, who in some crisis or event recognize an unexpected interposition of Providence.

"Are you the boy who ran away from the forist's in Washington?" I inquired when ready to speak. "The boy who delivered Miss Moore's bridal bouquet?"

"Yes, sir."

I let go of his hand and sat down. Surely there was a power greater than chance governing this matter. Through what devious ways and from what unexpected sources had I come upon this knowledge?

"Mrs. Jeffrey, or Miss Moore, as she was then, told Jim to seat the gentleman in the library," I now said. "Why?"

"I do not know. He told her the gentleman's name, and then she whispered him that. I heard her, and that was why I got money too. But it's all gone now. Oh, sir, when are you going back?"

I started to my feet. Was it in answer to this appeal or because I realized that I had come at last upon a clue calling for immediate action?

"I am going now," said I, "and you are going with me. Run, for the train we take leaves inside of ten minutes. My business here is over."

CHAPTER XX.

THE peremptory demand for an interview which had been delivered to Miss Moore during the half hour preceding her marriage had come not from the bridegroom, as I had supposed, but from the so-called stranger, Mr. Pfeiffer.

For all this proof that Mr. Pfeiffer was well known to her, if not to the rest of the bridal party, no acknowledgment of this was made by any of them then or afterward, nor any contradiction given either by husband or wife to the accepted theory that this seeming stranger from the west had gone into this fatal room of the Moores to gratify his own morbid curiosity.

On the contrary, an extraordinary effort was immediately made by Mr. Jeffrey to rid himself of the only witnesses who could tell the truth concerning those fatal ten minutes, but this brought no peace to the miserable wife, who never again saw a really happy moment.

[Continued next week.]

One Minute Cough Cure For Coughs, Colds and Croup.

CEMENT WALKS

GET OUR ESTIMATES AND YOU WILL SAVE MONEY

ALL OUR WORK IS GUARANTEED

ROLLINS & ARMSTRONG.

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.

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

BANK OF DENISON.

General Banking 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.

Capital \$100,000.

Deposits \$450,000.

Crawford County State Bank,

The Best Security for Depositors

DENISON, IOWA.

Farm Loans at Five Per Cent Interest

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 held to the amount of his share to any one 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 office. 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 Tickets Sold. Insurance Written. Loans Negotia

L. CORNWELL, GEO. NAEVE, M. E. JONES, C. J. KEMM, President, V-Pres., Cashier, Asst. Cash

Directors.—L. Cornwell, Geo Naeve, H F Schwartz, Chas. Labor, J P C

MY WORK SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

JOHN FASTJE,

CABINET WORK OF ALL KINDS

STORE SHELVING, OFFICE FIXTURES, ETC. ETC.

PRICES ON APPLICATION AND WORK GUARANTEED.

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