

Filigree Ball

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,

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

Copyright, 1923, by the Bobbs-Merrill Company

"Pardon me," I impetuously cried. "Mr. Pfeiffer's death is quite explained." And, drawing forward my hand, which up to this moment I had held tight shut behind my back, I slowly unrolled it before their astonished eyes.

A bit of lace lay in my palm, a delicate bit, such as is only worn by women in full dress.

"Where did you find that?" asked the

major, with the first show of deep emotion I have ever observed in him. My agitation was greater than his as I replied:

"In the rough boarding under those drawers. Some woman's arm and hand has preceded mine in stealthy search after that fatal spring. A woman who wore lace, valuable lace."

There was but one woman connected with this affair who rightly answered these conditions. The bride, Veronica Moore!

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERONICA MOORE'S real connection with Mr. Pfeiffer's death—a death which in some inscrutable way had in so short a time led to her own—was an overwhelming surprise to every one of us.

The superintendent, as was natural, recovered first.

"This throws quite a new light upon the matter," said he. "Now we can understand why Mr. Jeffrey uttered that extraordinary avowal overheard on the bridge: 'She must die!' She had come to him with blood on her hands."

Addressing the major, the district attorney asked when he expected to hear from Denver, adding that it had now become of the first importance to ascertain the exact relations existing between the persons under suspicion and the latest victim of this deadly mechanism.

He had hardly ceased speaking when an officer appeared with a telegram in his hand. This the major eagerly took, and, noting that it was in cipher, read it by means of the code he carried in his pocket. Translated, it ran thus:

"Result of open inquiry in Denver:

"Three brothers Pfeiffer, all well thought of, but plain in their ways and eccentric. One doing business in Denver; died June, '97. One perished in Klondike, October, same year; and one, by name Wallace, died suddenly three months since in Washington. Nothing further gained by secret inquiry in this place."

"Result of open inquiry in Owosso:

"A man named Pfeiffer kept a store in Owosso during the time V. M. attended school there. He was one of three brothers, home Denver, name Wallace. Simultaneously with V. M.'s leaving school P. broke up business and at instigation of his brother William, who accompanied him, went to the Klondike. No special relation between lady and this same P. ever noted. V. M. once heard to laugh at his awkward ways."

"Result of secret inquiry in Owosso:

"V. M. very intimate with schoolmate who has since died. Often rode together; once gone a long time. This was just before V. M. left school for good. Date same as that on which a marriage occurred in a town twenty miles distant. Bride, Antoinette Moore; groom, W. Pfeiffer of Denver; witness, young girl with red hair. Schoolmate had red hair. Had V. M. a middle initial, and was that initial A.?"

We all looked at each other. This last question was one none of us could answer.

"Go for Mr. Jeffrey at once," ordered the major, "and let another one of you bring Miss Tuttle. No word to either of what has occurred and no hint of their possible meeting here."

It fell to me to fetch Miss Tuttle. I was glad of this, as it gave me a few minutes by myself in which to compose my mind and adjust my thoughts to the new conditions opened up by the amazing facts which had just come to light. But beyond the fact that Mrs. Jeffrey had been answerable for the death which had occurred in the library at the time of her marriage—that, in the words of the district attorney, she had come to her husband with blood on her hands—my thoughts would not go. Confusion followed the least attempt to settle the vital question of how far Miss Tuttle and Mr. Jeffrey had been involved in the earlier crime and what the coming interview with these two would add to our present knowledge. In my anxiety to have this question answered I hastened my steps and was soon at the door of Miss Tuttle's present dwelling place.

I doubt if she noticed my agitation. She was too much swayed by her own. Advancing upon me in all the unconscious pride of her great beauty, she tremulously remarked:

"You have a message for me. Is it from headquarters, or has the district attorney still more questions to ask?"

"I have a much more trying errand than that," I hastened to say, with some idea of preparing her for an experience that could not fail to be one of exceptional trial. "For reasons which will be explained to you by those in greater authority than myself you are wanted at the house where—where"—I could not help stammering under the light of her melancholy eyes

—where I saw you once lamely concluded.

"The house in Waverley avenue?" she objected wildly, with the first signs of positive terror I had ever beheld in her.

I nodded, dropping my eyes. What had I to penetrate the conscience of this woman?

"Are they there—all there?" she presently asked again. "The police and—Mr. Jeffrey?"

"Madam," I respectfully protested, "my duty is limited to conducting you to the place named. A carriage is waiting. May I beg that you will prepare yourself to go at once to Waverley avenue?"

For answer she subjected me to a long and earnest look which I found it impossible to evade. Then she hastened from the room, but with very unsteady steps.

When she returned ready for her ride this change in her spirits was less observable, and by the time we had reached the house in Waverley avenue she had so far regained her old courage as to move and speak with the calmness of despair if not of mental serenity.

The major was awaiting us at the door and bowed gravely before her heavily veiled figure.

"Miss Tuttle," he asked, without any preamble, the moment she was well inside the house, "may I inquire of you here, and before I show you what will excuse us for subjecting you to the distress of entering these doors, whether your sister, Mrs. Jeffrey, had any other name or was ever known by any other name than that of Veronica?"

"She was christened Antoinette as well as Veronica, but the person in whose memory the former name was given her was no honor to the family, and she very soon dropped it and was only known as Veronica. Oh, what have I done?" she cried, awed and frightened by the silence which followed the utterance of these simple words.

Before any of us were quite ready to speak, a tap at the door told us that Durbin had arrived with Mr. Jeffrey. Facing the small group clustered in the dismal hall fraught with such unutterable associations, he earnestly prayed:

"Do not keep me in suspense. Why am I summoned here?"

"You are summoned to learn the murderous secret of these old walls, and who it was that first made use of it. Do you feel inclined to hear these details from my lips, or are you ready to state that you already know the means by which so many persons, in times past as well as in times present, have met death here? We do not require you to answer us."

"I know the means," he allowed, recognizing without doubt that the crisis of crises had come and that denial would be worse than useless.

"Then it only remains for us to acquaint you with the identity of the

The major



person who last pressed the fatal spring. But perhaps you know that too?"

"I"—He paused; words were impossible to him, and in that pause his eyes flashed helplessly in the direction of Miss Tuttle.

But the major was quick on his feet and was already between him and that lady. This act forced from Mr. Jeffrey's lips the following broken sentence:

"I should—like—you—to—tell—me." Great gasps came with each heavily spoken word.

"Perhaps this morsel of lace will do it in a greater manner than I could," responded the district attorney, opening his hand, in which lay the scrap of lace that an hour or so before I had plucked away from the boarding of that fatal closet.

Mr. Jeffrey eyed it and understood. His hands went up to his face, and he swayed to the point of falling. Miss Tuttle came quickly forward.

"Oh!" she moaned as her eyes fell on the little white shred. "The providence of God has found us out. We have suffered, labored and denied in vain."

"Yes," came in dreary echo from the man none of us had understood till now; "so great a crime could not be hid. God will have vengeance. What are we that we should hope to avert it by any act or at any cost?"

The major, with his eyes fixed piercingly on this miserable man, replied with one pregnant sentence:

"Then you forced your wife to suicide?"

"No," he began. But before another word could follow Miss Tuttle, resplendent in beauty and beaming with new life, broke in with the fervid cry:

"You wrong him and you wrong her by such a suggestion. It was not her husband, but her conscience, that forced her to this retributive act.

What Mr. Jeffrey might have done had she proved obdurate and blind to the enormity of her own guilt I do not know, but that he is innocent of so influencing her is proved by the shock he suffered at finding she had taken her punishment into her own hands."

"Mr. Jeffrey will please answer the question," insisted the major, whereupon the latter, with great effort, but with the first appearance of real candor yet seen in him, said earnestly:

"I did nothing to influence her. I was in no condition to do so. I was benumbed—dead. When first she told me—it was in some words muttered in her sleep—I thought she was laboring under some fearful nightmare, but when she persisted and I questioned her and found the horror true I was like a man turned instantly into stone save for one intolerable throb within. I am still so. Everything passes by me like a dream. She was so young, seemingly so innocent and light hearted. I loved her! Gentlemen, you have thought me guilty of my wife's death, this young fairylike creature to whom I ascribed all the virtues, and I was willing, willing that you should think so, willing even to face the distrust and opprobrium of the whole world, and so was her sister, the noble woman whom you see before you, rather than that the full horror of her crime should be known and a name so dear be given up to execration. We thought we could keep the secret—we felt that we must keep the secret. We took an oath—in French—in the carriage, with the detectives opposite us. She kept it—God bless her! I kept it. But it was all useless—a tiny bit of lace is found hanging to a lifeless splinter, and all our efforts, all the hopes and agony of weeks, are gone for naught. The world will soon know of her awful deed—and I—"

He still loved her. That was apparent in every look, in every word he uttered. We marveled in awkward silence and were glad when the major said:

"The deed, as I take it, was an unpremeditated one on her part. Is that why her honor was dearer to you than your own, and why you could risk the reputation if not the life of the woman who you say sacrificed herself to it?"

"Yes, it was unpremeditated. She hardly realized her act. If you must know her heart through all this dreadful business we have her words to show you—words which she spent the last miserable day of her life in writing. The few lines which I showed the captain and which have been published to the world was an inclosure meant for the public eye. The real letter, telling the whole terrible truth, I kept for myself and for the sister who already knew her sin. Oh, we did everything we could!" And he again moaned. "But it was in vain; quite in vain."

There were no signs of subtlety in him now, and we all, unless I except Durbin, began to yield him credence. Durbin never gives credence to anybody whose name he has once heard associated with crime.

"And this Pfeiffer was contracted to her? A man she had secretly married while a schoolgirl and who at this very critical instant had found his way to the house?"

"You shall read her letter. It was meant for me, for me only—but you shall see it. I cannot talk of him or of her crime. It is enough that I have been unable to think of anything else since first those dreadful words fell from her lips in sleep, thirty-six hours before she died." Then with the inconsistency of great anguish he suddenly broke forth into the details he shrank from and cried:

"She muttered, lying there, that she was no bigamist. That she had killed one husband before she married the other. Killed him in the old house and by the method her ancestors had taught her. And I, risen on my elbow, listened, with the sweat oozing from my forehead, but not believing her, oh, not believing her, any more than any one of you would believe such words uttered in a dream by the darling of your heart. But when, with a long drawn sigh, she murmured, 'Murderer!' and raised her fists—my fists, hands which I had kissed a thousand times—and shook them in the air, an awful terror seized me, and I sought to grasp them and hold them down, but was hindered by some nameless inner recoil under which I could not speak or gasp or move. Of course, it was some dream horror she was laboring under, a nightmare of unimaginable awe and thoughts, but it was one to hold me back; and when she lay quiet again and her face resumed its old sweetness in the moonlight, I found myself staring at her almost as if it were true—what she had said—that word—that awful word which no woman could use with regard to herself, even in dreams, unless—something, an echo from the discordant chord in our two weeks' married life, rose like the confirmation of a doubt in my shocked and rebellious breast.

[Continued next week.]

Very Low Rates to Denver, Colo.

Via the Northwestern Line for tickets to be sold June 30 to July 4 inclusive, with favorable return limits, on account of International Epworth League Convention. Apply to agents Chicago & Northwestern R'y.

Epworth League Special Train, Chicago & North-Western R'y.

The Epworth League meets at Denver, Colo., July 3 to 9, and special through trains have been arranged for delegates and their friends. An excellent opportunity to make a tour of Colorado and the Far West with congenial company and at a minimum of expense. Special trains run through without change, arriving at Denver before the opening of the convention.

Beautiful Lake View

is an ideal summer resort. Good hunting and fishing. The Northwestern Line will sell excursion tickets to Lake View at \$1.25 for the round trip from Leavenworth, Fridays and Saturdays, tickets limited to return on or before the following Monday. Other low rate round trip tickets good for 30 days. Apply to agents Chicago & Northwestern R'y.

Modern Miracle

How to eat your Cake and have it too

Circus Goers You can spend Saturday in Denison, take in the Big Show, the After Concert and all the Side Shows, without it costing you a cent, if, at the same time you take advantage of the tremendous bargains at **Our Going Out of Business Sale.** The amount saved on a suit of clothes will pay all your expenses for the day.

The Hub

E. C. PETERSEN
Proprietor,
Denison, - Iowa

CIRCUS DENISON SATURDAY JUNE 10

THE DOMINANT GIANT OF MODERN AMUSEMENTS



THE GREAT
ADAM FOREPAUGH
AND SELLS BROS
ENORMOUS SHOWS UNITED

Incomparably Bigger Than Ever, Occupying the Highest Plane Possible to Big Circus Creation

THE FOREPAUGH-SELLS BROS. SHOWS present this year the Greatest Gathering of World-Famous Features ever seen. It is not a show of one, two or three prominent acts and displays, but the entire aggregation of Animal Wonders, Human Achievements and Spectacular Grandeur in every detail is composed of World-Renowned Features selected with the view to make this the

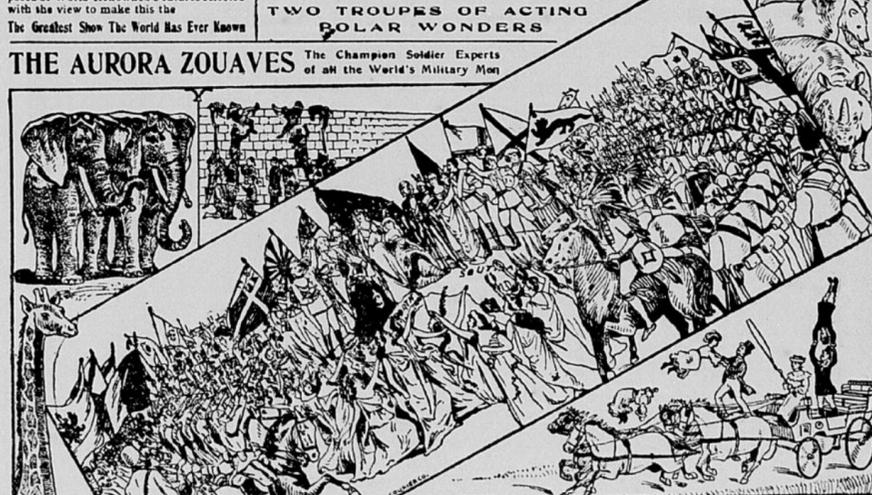
The Greatest Show The World Has Ever Known

"PANAMA" The Superb, Patriotic GORGEOUS 1,000-CHARACTER SPECTACLE

14 WOLKOWSKYS Marvelous Russian Acrobatic Whirlwind Dancers

CAPT. WEBB'S TRAINED SEALS TWO TROUPES OF ACTING POLAR WONDERS

THE AURORA ZOUAVES The Champion Soldier Experts of All the World's Military Men



O'BRIEN TROUPE Starting Equestrian Sensation! THE LATEST AND GREATEST OF RIDING EXPLOITS

DINUS THE TWO GREATEST TROUPES OF ACROBATS Ever Brought to America

6-FOLD CIRCUS of 300 Performers Given in 3 Rings, 2 Stages and in the Air.

10 POLAR BEARS BESIDES EVERY STRANGE, CURIOUS, COSTLY CREATURE KNOWN TO ZOOLOGY CONSTITUTING THE LARGEST MENAGERIE IN ALL THE WORLD

KONGO and ZEFFA Mammoth African Huge-Tusked, Giant-Eared Elephants, and Three Big Herds of Wisest Acting Elephants in the Most ASTONISHING SHOW OF ELEPHANT SAGACITY EVER SEEN

Reserved Seats and Admission Tickets on Sale show day at Lamborn's Drug Store at same prices charged on the show grounds.

The Grandest Longest, Richest Most Gorgeous Free Street PARADE

Every Morning at 10 O'Clock

ONE FIFTY-CENT TICKET ADMITS TO EVERYTHING. CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE YEARS, HALF-PRICE. TWO COMPLETE EXHIBITIONS DAILY. DOORS OPEN AT 1:00 AND 7:00 P. M. PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT 2:00 AND 8:00 P. M.