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

"I have visited the old house many times during my sojourn in this little cottage. The last time was, as one of our number has so ably discovered, the most memorable night in its story; the one in which Mrs. Jeffrey's remarkable death occurred there. The interest roused in me by the unexpected recurrence of the old fatality at

Mr. Curran

tending the library hearthstone reached its culmination when I perceived one night the glint of a candle burning in the southwest chamber. I did not know who was responsible for this light, but I strongly suspected it to be Mr. Jeffrey, for who else would dare to light a candle in this disused house without first seeing that all the shutters were fast?

"I did not dislike Mr. Jeffrey or question his right to do this. Nevertheless I was very angry. Though allied to a Moore, he was not one himself, and the difference in our privileges affected me strongly; consequently I watched till he came out and upon positively recognizing his figure vowed in my wrath and jealous indignation to visit the old house myself on the following night and make one final attempt to learn the secret which would again make me feel myself the equal of this man, if not his superior.

"It was early when I went; indeed it was not quite dark, but, knowing the gloom of those old halls and the almost impenetrable nature of the darkness which settles over the library the moment the twilight sets in, I put in my pocket two or three candles, the candles, sirs, about which you have made such a coil. My errand was twofold—I wanted first to see what Mr. Jeffrey had been up to the night before, and next to spend an hour over a thin book of old memoirs which in telling the past might explain the present. You remember a door leading into the library from the rear room. It was by this door I entered, bringing with me from the kitchen the chair you afterward found there.

"I knew where the volume of memoirs I speak of was to be found—you know, I see—for it was my hand which had placed it in its present confinement. Quite determined to reread such portions of it as I had long before marked as pertinent to the very attempt I had in mind, I brought in the candelabrum from the parlor and drew out a table to hold it. But I waited a few moments before taking down the book itself. I wanted first to learn what Mr. Jeffrey had been doing upstairs the night before; so, leaving the light burning in the library, I proceeded to the southwest chamber, holding an unlit candle in my hand, the light feebly diffused through the halls from some upper windows being sufficient for me to see my way. But in the chamber itself all was dark.

"The wind had not yet risen and the shutter which a half hour later moved so restlessly on its creaking hinges hugged the window so tightly that I imagined Mr. Jeffrey had fastened it the night before. Looking for some receptacle in which to set the candle I now lit, I failed to find anything but an empty tumbler, so I made use of that. Then I glanced about me, but seeing nothing worth my attention—Mrs. Jeffrey's wedding fixings did not interest me and everything else about the room looking natural except the overturned chair, which struck me as important—I hurried downstairs again, leaving the candle burning behind me in case I should wish to return after my book. I had refreshed my mind with what had been written about this old house.

"Not a sound disturbed the house as I seated myself to my reading in one of the library shelves. I was an hour thus under the spell of the past, when I could be with my reader with perfect ease. I could even think that I was making a very proper use of my time in thus busying myself on a subject in which I had been another old fashioned book, which, however, was quite unobtainable to me, I was obliged to remain to listening. Some one was knocking the front door.

Uncle David gives up

"Naturally I thought it to be Mr. Jeffrey returning for a second visit to his wife's house, and, knowing what I might expect if he surprised me on the premises, I restored the book hastily to its place and as hastily blew out the candle. Then, with every intention of flight, I backed toward the door by which I had entered. But some impulse stronger than that of escape made me stop just before I reached it. I could see nothing—the place was dark as Tophet—but I could listen. The person—Mr. Jeffrey or some other—was coming my way, and in perfect darkness. I could hear the faltering steps—the fingers dragging along the walls; then a rustle as of skirts, proving the intruder to be a woman—a fact which greatly surprised me—then a long drawn sigh or gasp.

"This last determined me. The situation was too intense for me to leave without first learning who the woman was who in terror and shrinking dared to drag her half resisting feet through these empty halls and into a place cursed with such unwholesome memories. I did not think of Veronica. No one looks for a butterfly in the depths of a dungeon. But I did think of Miss Tuttle—that woman of resolute will. Without attempting to imagine the reason for her presence, I stood my ground and harkened till the heavy mahogany door at the other end of the room began to swing in by jerks under the faint and tremulous push of a terrified hand. Then there came silence—a long silence—followed by a moan so agonized that I realized that whatever was the cause of this panting woman's presence here, it was due to no mere errand of curiosity. This whetted my purpose. Anything done in this house was in a way done to me; so I remained quiet and watched. But the sounds which now and then came from the remote corner upon which my attention was concentrated were very eloquent.

"I heard sighs and bitter groans, with now and then a murmured prayer, broken by a low wailing, in which I caught the name of Francis. And still, possibly on account of the utterance of this name, I thought the woman near me to be Miss Tuttle, and even went so far as to imagine the cause of her suffering if not the nature of her retribution. Words succeeded cries and I caught phrases expressive of fear and some sort of agonized hesitation. Once these broken ejaculations were interrupted by a dull sound. Something had dropped to the bare floor. We shall never know what it was, but I have no doubt that it was the pistol, and that the marks of dust to be found on the connecting ribbon were made by her own fingers in taking it again in her hand. (You will remember that these same fingers had but a few minutes previous groped their way along the walls.) For her voice soon took a different tone, and such unintelligible phrases as these could be heard issuing from her partly paralyzed lips:

"'I must! I can never meet his eye again alive. He would despise— Brave enough to—to—another's blood—coward—when—own. Oh, God, forgive!' Then another silence, during which I almost made up my mind to interfere, then a loud report and a flash so startling and unexpected that I recoiled, during which the room leaped into sudden view—she, too, Veronica, with baby face drawn and set like a woman's—then darkness again and a heavy fall which shook the floor, if not my hard old heart. The flash and that fall enlightened me. I had just witnessed the suicide of the last Moore saving myself, a suicide for which I was totally unprepared and one which I do not yet understand.

The major denounces Uncle David

"I did not go over to her. She was as dead when she fell as she ever would be. In the flash which lit everything I had seen where her pistol was pointed. Why disturb her, then? Nor did I return upstairs. I had small interest now in anything but my own escape from a situation more or less compromising. Do you blame me for that? I was safe here, and I was where I had every right to be. Do you think I should have called down to pull the bell rope? Do you think I should have called down to pull the bell rope? Do you think I should have called down to pull the bell rope? I should have called down to pull the bell rope? I should have called down to pull the bell rope?