

The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME

CHAPTER I.

I know how silly it is of me to fret over this separation of a few weeks, Jack, but I'm suffering from that most feminine of all feminine ailments—a presentiment. I have a horrible dread that you will not come back to me just the same as you leave me.

Jack Dornton knew this was all very foolish. He loved pretty Ethel Mallett very dearly; so, instead of putting his thought into words, he kissed the tearful face and lovingly comforted her with vows of eternal constancy.

"You know I needn't stay down there until the pictures are finished," he said. "As soon as I have the sketches well forward, I shall come back and complete the larger pictures from them at home; and, though I shall be working very hard, that will not prevent you from coming every day to watch my progress and cheer me up for an hour or so in the afternoon."

Ethel smiled—it was rather a pitiful attempt—and turned resolutely to the breakfast table.

"It was good of you to think of coming to breakfast with us, so that we might see the last of you before starting," she said bravely, as she busied herself with the coffee cups. Mr. Mallett came down a few moments later, and breakfast was got through with due decorum, in deference to "papa's dislike to emotion."

Shortly after the meal Jack was tramping away—his portmanteau in one hand and a portable easel in the other. He had been engaged to Ethel Mallett for two months, and they were to be married as soon as he could provide a suitable home for her. A fortnight after he had obtained the reluctant consent of Mr. Mallett to this arrangement, a certain Lord Summers, attracted by two water colors of Jack's in a fashionable gallery, had found him out and offered him a liberal commission to execute a series of six pictures, the subjects to be selected from the immediate neighborhood of his lordship's place in Exburyshire. Jack had jumped at the offer, seeing that it would enable him to place Ethel in a home of her own two months sooner than he anticipated.

So here he was, after a two hours' run, hard at work in the woods of Mallingford, skillfully and rapidly filling in the leading features of Mallingford House and its surroundings. While his fingers were thus busy, he was recalling the conversation he had had with Lord Summers upon the place of his first subject.

"Would you wish me to begin with Summerfield?" Jack had asked, when taking his final instructions from his lordship.

"No; I should like to be at Summerfield myself when you are there. I think you had better make Mallingford House your first subject. It is about ten miles from Summerfield, and you can work your way toward there. I shall be down by the last week of July, and hope to have the pleasure of showing you some hospitality."

Jack bowed his thanks.

"You will be delighted with Mallingford," his lordship went on. "It is a noble place, and I have a rather peculiar interest in the property. The late owner, Sir Paul Malling, was a most eccentric man, with a very exalted notion of his own importance as head of the house. He had never married, and was mortally offended with his brother Geoffrey because he took unto himself a wife at the age of thirty-eight without first consulting him. Poor Paul! He was a great friend of mine; but I'm bound to confess that he was of a most unforgiving disposition. Would you believe it, Mr. Dornton? He was so unjust as to disinherited Geoffrey and leave the whole of his property to his only sister's only child, Pauline Luffton. His will confirmed his reputation for eccentricity, for he made even her inheritance conditional; first, upon her taking the name of Malling, and, secondly, upon her not marrying under the age of twenty-five without her guardian's approval and consent. A very awkward thing for the guardian. I am that not-to-be-believed person. So, you see, should the young lady in question happen to fall in love with some poor beggar of a fellow, I could not consistently give my consent, and she would have to give up either her love or her position as owner of Mallingford, one of the finest seats in the county."

"In which case?" Jack said, interrogatively.

"In which case the disinherited brother would have his own. But I am glad to say that my charming ward will be twenty-five in September and will then be in a position to please herself in her choice of a husband—for which I am devoutly thankful, as it relieves me of a serious responsibility."

"I can quite understand that."

"I was in hopes at first that I should not be called upon to exercise my guardianship at all. When Sir Paul died, Pauline was away with her father in Italy. He was a sad reprobate, and spent his time chiefly in gambling houses, leaving his motherless girl among all kinds of people. Well, as fate willed, this Luffton died just a month before Sir Paul, and, though we made every effort to find his daughter, we could obtain no tidings of her. We traced the father and daughter to Naples, where the former died; but after that we could hear nothing of her. We sent out agents, we advertised, we did everything we could. At last, after five months of fruitless inquiry, and just as we were losing heart, and wondering whether we should not begin to hunt up poor Geoffrey, she appeared suddenly at my office. She looked wretchedly ill, said she had been working her heart out as a teacher of English at a Spanish school, and had only recently seen one of our advertisements. She was nineteen then—and that is nearly six years ago."

And now, as Jack Dornton stood in the shady wood, with the noonday sun making little patches of white here and there

wherever it could pierce the thick foliage above, and with a buzzing of insects in his ears, he was weaving all sorts of romantic fancies concerning the owner of all the beauty surrounding him.

CHAPTER II.

From behind the bole of a large tree Jack Dornton was being narrowly scanned by a young lady, who seemed well pleased with the inspection. She watched him at work for some minutes with a decided look of admiration in her eyes. She turned from her survey presently, and stooping down, crept away slowly among the brushwood, making a detour with the evident intention of reaching the spot again.

In the meantime Jack, stretching himself after his spell of work, noticed a small natural mound covered with soft velvety grass. The more he looked the stronger became the temptation to take ten minutes' rest. He yielded at last, and found the mound an excellent pillow.

Before he had enjoyed two of the allotted ten minutes' rest, his open pocket, containing a portrait of Ethel, dropped from his hand, and a myriad of gnat buzzed and whizzed in happy freedom round his head. Jack Dornton was fast asleep.

At that moment a woman came gliding by in full view of the easel. She was a woman of surpassing loveliness, tall, stately, with mass of golden hair, coiled round and round her head, full melting brown eyes and ripe red lips, a skin rivaling the peach in its delicate coloring, and a carriage queenly in its every movement. Her dainty caubric gown, cunningly made to "more express than hide her form," trained carelessly among the ivy roots and brambles behind her. Her simple straw hat she carried in her hand, and her whole air suggested the pretty "maiden meditation fancy free."

She gave a well-forgotten start when she had come well in view of Jack's easel. It was not pleasant to watch the swift change that came over the beautiful face as she marked the vacant seat and thought herself alone. It revealed unmistakably the defects of her character as indicated in the cruel little curves at the corners of the mouth, which were generally concealed beneath the pretty coquettish smile that from long practice had become habitual with her.

Advancing cautiously, she glanced around, and soon discovered Jack's whereabouts. She went quickly to the easel, and critically examined the morning's work. Turning aside, she remarked to herself, "With such decided talent and such an appearance, he would be sure to succeed if he were properly taken up." She then walked on tip toe to Jack, and scrutinized him quite as critically as she had scrutinized his work, and evidently with as much approval. Then her quick eye detected the open pocket by his side.

She looked carefully at the sleeper and having assured herself of the soundness of his slumbers, went down upon her knees by his side, the better to examine the portrait.

She started visibly when her eyes fell upon the sweet face smiling at her from the tiny trinket. She rose quickly and walked away a few yards.

"So she is this landscape painter's 'village maiden'!" she muttered vindictively. "Surely there is some fatality in his coming here! I can't be mistaken, it is the same insipid babyishly pretty face that Lord Summers pointed out to me in the park the other day. And she loves this Apollo, does she? And perhaps he thinks he loves her. Well, we shall see what we shall see."

There was a significant glitter in her fine eyes, and an instantaneous tightening of the red lips seemed to tell of a hard, cruel heart beneath the fair exterior. But the expression of her face changed as if by magic when Jack rolled over on to his side and showed signs of waking. She had posed gracefully before the easel, and awaited him.

"I believe I've been asleep," he murmured drowsily, raising himself on one elbow, when his eyes fell upon the dazzling loveliness of the girl so earnestly regarding his picture; and in the first glimpse of Pauline Malling, Jack's senses and artistic perceptions were alike roused, and, springing to his feet he went toward the easel.

"I beg your pardon for the liberty I have taken in examining your picture," murmured the woodland nymph melodiously. "I hope I did not disturb you. May I be allowed to continue my inspection?"

Jack, hardly awake even yet, muttered something about "too much honor."

"You are Mr. Dornton, are you not?" she continued, still looking at the picture, and giving Jack time to pull himself together. "Lord Summers told me he was going to ask you to make a picture of my house."

It was Miss Malling then, and no woodland nymph, after all. Jack felt disappointed, though he could not tell why. "I suppose you will remain here for some days. May I offer you a little hospitality during your stay? The village inn is, I believe, wretchedly uncomfortable, and I should not like a friend of my guardian's to be driven to their shelter while I am at home. We are two lonely women just now, and but dull company, I fear; but we will do our best to make you comfortable for this week at least. Next week I am off again until the end of the season, and shall have to leave you to the mercies of the servants. Say you will come."

"Thank you very much," Jack began hesitatingly; "but I did not anticipate—in fact, I made no preparation—"

"Is that the only difficulty?" she interrupted gently. "Pray don't let that stand in the way. Mrs. Sefon and I will shut our eyes to the enormity of a morning coat at dinner, and will promise to think no less of you on that account. We dine at half past seven, so that we may have an hour or two of these lovely summer evenings in the garden."

Jack raised his soft felt hat, and watched her graceful figure as she glided away down the dim leafy vista of the wood. He wished that she had stayed longer, that he might still be looking into her glorious eyes, watching the ever changing lights that came and went as rapidly as scudding clouds across a summer sky. When at last a curve in the path hid her from view he turned again to his work with a heavy sigh, wishing it was already half past seven.

CHAPTER III.

"Now you are to consider yourself quite at home, Mr. Dornton," Miss Malling said, as she rose from the table. "Stay and meditate here in solitude, or come out on the terrace, as suits your inclination."

The moon came out by and by, throwing from behind a curtain of tender gray clouds a soft, silvery, shimmering light over the landscape.

After Mrs. Sefon had gone indoors, Pauline led the conversation in a manner that quite entranced her companion. The witchery of the evening, the beauty of the woman, and the spell of her fascinating nature, and his dreams that night were of lovely women with golden hair and liquid brown eyes.

A week later, Jack Dornton stood at the breakfast room window, apparently absorbed in the calm, radiant beauty of the scene before him; yet his breast was torn with conflicting passions.

Pauline Malling was returning to town by the midday train, and the pain that her proposed departure had caused him had also opened his eyes to the hateful truth that he had been unfaithful to his little Ethel's memory.

"What a blind fool I have been," he told himself, wrathfully, "to stay here day after day, and not see my own kind and gentle; but I dare say she looks upon me as belonging to a very inferior class to her own; and I, to show my gratitude, must return her womanly kindness by presuming to fall in love with her! Apart from my supreme conceit with regard to Miss Malling, I have behaved shamefully to Ethel." He went on; and a flush of self-condemnation crept over his handsome face. "I've been away from her a whole week, and only one short note have I sent her."

He seated himself at the writing table in the window and seized a pen. He nibbled the penholder, as if in expectation of receiving inspiration from the act. Before he had quite made up his mind as to the wording of his overdue love letter he heard a rustle at the door, and Miss Malling entered in her elegant traveling costume.

"How I shall miss your pleasant little morning chats, Mr. Dornton!"—with a gentle sigh—"our happy sketching expeditions, and our delightful evenings!"

"You cannot miss them as I shall," Jack returned.

"You think not?" raising her eyes slowly to his and dropping her voice mournfully. "That shows how little you know and appreciate your gain in possessing the hearty love and esteem of a few true friends, instead of the monotonous adulation of a horde of mere fashionable acquaintances. You cannot understand, because you have never experienced it, how the emptiness of our lives sometimes falls upon us butterflies, and what we would give at such times to have a real object in life; how we long for the affection of one disinterested creature!"

Here Jack would have precipitated himself bodily into the yawning chasm she had so conveniently opened for him, but for the entrance of Mrs. Sefon, who proceeded to dispense the comfort of the breakfast table in her own inimitable manner. The carriage was at the door before the meal was properly over.

"Good-by, Mr. Dornton," said Pauline, as she stood with one dainty foot upon the step. "I shall hope to find you here when I return; and I fear," she continued, again lowering her voice dangerously, "I shall not be able to endure much of London's rapid society after the intellectual intercourse we have enjoyed lately. I shall be back in a fortnight. You will not forget me at that time?"

(To be continued.)

Fickleness of Woman.

Gray—Hello, Smith, old boy! And so you are married, eh?

Smith—That's what the parson told me.

Gray—And, of course, you are happy?

Smith—Well, I don't know about that. To tell the plain, unvarnished truth, I'm just a little bit disappointed.

Gray—I'm sorry to hear that. What's the trouble?

Smith—Well, you see, during the courtship stunt she used to tell me how strenuously she loved me, but we had no sooner got spliced than she gave up her \$10 a week job as typewriter thumper. That goes to show how much you can bank on a woman's love.

What He Was Afraid of.

Rounder—Is it true that you are engaged to that young widow?

Gayboy—Not at the present writing. We were engaged, but I broke it off.

Rounder—Aren't you afraid she will take it to heart?

Gayboy—No, but I'm afraid she will take it to court.

Told in Confidence.

The Caller—The man who wrote that poem you printed yesterday didn't know what he was writing about.

The Editor—Of course not. Otherwise it wouldn't have been poetry.

Putting Him Wise.

Her Father—What are you and young Shortleigh going to live on in case you marry?

His Daughter—Well, if you must know, papa, go look in the mirror.

Strenuous Hint.

Husband—Let me see, how long has it been since Uncle John was here?

Wife—Oh, it must be several years. He was here the week after I got my last new bonnet.—Detroit Tribune.

Quite Likely.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what does this paper mean by "ties of blood?"

Pa—Must be a new shade of red neckties, my son.

Conquest of the Great American Desert

Montana is coming in for a big share of the general prosperity of the country, and it will only be a few short years when she will rank with any of the Northwestern States in agricultural greatness. The recent act of the Interior Department of the United States in setting aside \$1,000,000 toward reclaiming three or four hundred thousand acres in the Milk River Valley is but a beginning of a much vaster development of this section as the needs grow apace. Already the agricultural worth of this to be famous valley has been adequately demonstrated in the results which have followed the irrigation works already established. It has been successfully proven that all kinds of agricultural products grow in great abundance wherever irrigation is used. The soil is naturally rich and needs only moisture to make it yield prolifically. The Great Northern Railway's main line practically cuts the valley in two. The fact that the government has decided to begin immediate operations will prove a great incentive to the people of that section who have always believed in the future of their country and will open to settlement a vast area of rich land to the homeseeker and investor.

Professor Elwood Mead, the irrigation expert of the United States Department of Agriculture, has borne enthusiastic testimony to the great capabilities of the Sacramento Valley when supplied with water, in canals and ditches, for irrigation. He says, in an official report, that its available water supply should make it "the Egypt of the Western Hemisphere."

The irrigable area of the valley is estimated to be more than 3,000,000 acres, and calculations show that the average annual discharge of the Sacramento River at its mouth is sufficient to irrigate every acre of this great area. Professor Mead, after remarking that it is a sinful waste to allow so much water to flow unused to the sea, save for purposes of navigation, thus illustrates the astonishing variety of the products of the soil:

"Within a radius of five miles in the Sacramento Valley I saw every product of the temperate and semitropical zones which I could call to mind. Apples and oranges grew side by side, as did oak and almond trees. There were olives from the South and cherries from the North. A date palm seemed equally at home with an alfalfa meadow; figs and Tokay grapes were apparently as much in their element as the fields of wheat or barley or the rows of Indian corn, some of the stalks of which measured fifteen feet in height. All of these could have been grown on a single acre, and doubtless have been."

In another report the same authority expresses a like view, as follows:

In September last I saw a part of the Sacramento Valley in its most lovely aspect. One of the trips taken was from Chico to Willows, two towns about thirty miles apart, but the road thirty-five miles shrill emfwp shr traveled made the distance about thirty-five miles. We crossed what is potentially one of the most fertile and promising agricultural districts on this continent. For scores of miles the land rises by a gentle and uniform slope from the Sacramento River toward the foothills on either side. Water would flow over every acre of the country traversed without requiring much labor in its direction or skill in the location of lateral ditches. The plains of Lombardy are not better suited to irrigation, nor the soil of the Nile Delta more fertile than were these lands originally. For a half century they have been devoted to the unremitting production of cereal crops. Each season the grain shipped away, and the straw burned, and nothing done to replace the plant food withdrawn. A more exhaustive form of agriculture cannot be imagined. Although this surprising drain has gone on for fifty years, it cannot continue forever.

The absence of rainfall during the harvest period is one of the great advantages of California, where the needed moisture can be supplied by irrigation. It is likewise one of the greatest obstacles to diversified agriculture where dependence is had on rainfall alone. The natural opportunities of the district traversed are equal to, if not greater than those of the country surrounding Riverside, Cal., which has been appropriately designated as the "Garden Spot of America," but a difference in agricultural ideas has produced a corresponding difference in conditions.

The bonanza wheat farm and the bonanza orchard were in accord with the spirit which from the first has dominated the industries of California. It is a State of vast enterprises. Men pride themselves on great undertakings and doing whatever they undertake on a large scale. Wheat can be grown in this way. The man with capacity for organization can look after the growing of 10,000 acres of wheat, as easily as ten acres. It is an industry freed from detail. There is a period of seed time and harvest, and long intervals of complete freedom. It has none of the petty incidents which go with the management of a farm where there are chickens and pigs, where cows are to be milked, and

butter and eggs marketed, where each month has its duties, and where there is no time when something does not need attention. This sort of farming comes with high-priced land and a dense population, but it does not appeal to the imagination like the plowing of fields so large that turning a single furrow requires a day's journey, or the cultivation of the ground with steam plows and harrows. The cutting, threshing and sacking of grain at a single operation is spectacular as well as effective. In this respect it resembles the range cattle business in its best days.



Acute Indigestion.

Acute indigestion may result from many causes, but when it follows immediately upon a holiday feast, it is usually attributable to overdistention of the stomach, aggravated, perhaps, by the presence of such indigestible things as pastry and plum pudding. It occurs a little oftener in children, but in them it is rarely so serious in its consequences as it is in adults, for nausea is more readily induced and more promptly yielded to, and as soon as the stomach has got rid of its burden, the trouble is at an end. An adult, on the other hand, struggles against the feeling of oppression, and often intensifies it while seeking to relieve it by taking stimulating potions.

In many cases the first indication of the disturbance is loss of consciousness or a violent convulsion resembling an epileptic seizure. Sometimes, indeed, it is difficult to distinguish the attack from one of heart failure or an apoplexy, for both these conditions are favored by overindulgence. A distinction is important, however, for neglect of appropriate treatment in either condition may favor a fatal termination.

The old advice to quit a meal before a feeling of satiety has been obtained is still good; one should cease at least before a sense of discomfort has been produced, and room should always be allowed for the secretion of the gastric juice, which in an adult often amounts to nearly a quart. When the walls of the stomach have been distended to their utmost capacity by food, the addition of so much fluid would seem of itself enough to induce the attack; or if the distention prevents the secretion of the fluid, as it does normal muscular movements, the process of digestion is delayed, the food is retained too long in the stomach, it undergoes abnormal decomposition, inflammation is induced, and this extending to the small intestine may lead to more protracted illness.

In the treatment of acute indigestion, the production of nausea should be favored. When vomiting occurs, it should not be checked until the stomach has been relieved of its burden. If it does not occur spontaneously, it should generally be induced.

If unconsciousness or a convulsion has supervened, a physician must be called without delay, for it may be necessary to administer an emetic subcutaneously.

Following this, a laxative is generally given, and the diet for a few days is limited to easily digestible, unirritating food. Milk, of course, is the safest form of nourishment, except for those with whom it does not agree, and the addition to it of a little lime-water or Vichy will often remove all objection.—Youth's Companion.

Troublesome Children.

Everything is relative, after all, even age; yet one might suspect that the "children" of one of Mr. Muzzey's Men of the Revolution might have arrived at years of some discretion and proper regard for behavior.

When I saw the old soldier, says Mr. Muzzey, he was the sole survivor of those who witnessed the Battle of Bunker Hill. At the age of 95 years he was attending a Whig celebration held at Boston in 1850, and there I met him. He was a good-looking old man with a large, well-shaped head, blue eyes and mild expression. His whole countenance beamed with benevolence. I asked him if he had any children.

"Oh, yes, I have two sons," he replied.

"Why did you not bring them with you?"

The old man's smooth brow wrinkled into a semblance of a frown as he said:

"I didn't want to be plagued with those boys on an occasion of this sort."

"Why, how old are they?" I asked, wondering if he could mean his grandchildren.

"Oh, one is 70 and the other is 72. But I couldn't be bothered with them."

One of Their Own Set.

A party of New York brokers caught a five-foot shark the other day while out yachting. As soon as it gave them the sign of recognition they turned it loose.—Denver News.

It is said that a man never regrets back to work properly until after his honeymoon, and he has had his second quarrel with his wife.

A Little Lesson In Patriotism

James Brewerton Ricketts had served on the Canadian border guard and had been conspicuous in the war with Mexico for his gallant conduct on the field before he entered the Union army at the beginning of the civil war. His first duty in the civil war was the defense of the city of Washington. Later he was transferred to the capture of Alexandria.

In the disastrous battle of Bull Run, on the 21st of July,

James B. Ricketts, 1861, he was wounded and captured. On that very day he had been brevetted lieutenant colonel and made brigadier general of United States volunteers. He was held as a prisoner of war, but was exchanged in the following year. In June, 1862, he was active in the operations in the valley of the Shenandoah, and participated with the Army of the Potomac in the Maryland, the Northern Virginia and the Richmond campaigns.

He served in the siege of Petersburg, Va., in the defense of Maryland against the raid of Gen. Jubal Early, receiving the brevet of major general for gallant conduct during the war.

His bravery at the battle of Cedar Creek was exceptionally noteworthy. He was never out of the range of the Confederate fire, and was always to be found in the thick of the fight, even though he himself was wounded during the charge.

HISTORIC LONG ISLAND CHURCH.



St. George's Episcopal Church at Hempstead, L. I., for the remodeling of which plans are being arranged, is one of the historic edifices of the country. In April, 1904, the two hundredth anniversary of its passing into the control of the Episcopalians was celebrated. The present church is the fourth that has stood on the site. It possesses a royal charter presented by Queen Anne, and also a communion set given by the same ruler in 1706, together with a Bible, prayer book, a book of homilies, and silver chalice and patens. The interior of St. George's is considered to be unusually quaint. The roof is supported by twelve huge pillars of solid oak that extend into the basement. It boasts a clock that has kept time for nearly 100 years.

Live with Cow and Pigs.

Dr. William B. May and Detectives Condon and Shook, under orders from Health Commissioner Greene, investigated the house of Ludwig Staronski, a Russian, says a Buffalo special to the St. Louis Republic. Dr. May's report is as follows:

"Adjoining the house is a small summer kitchen. In that apartment was a closet, in which a pig was quartered. The improvised stall was so narrow that the animal was unable to turn. In the front room, what might be termed a parlor, was a cow."

"While we were on our tour of inspection two goats dropped in to see what was going on. The stench was unbearable. Four dogs comprise the rest of the menagerie, not to mention the numerous chickens which were allowed to roam at will through the house. We were informed that eight persons, including some small children, lived in the small rooms, along with the cow, the pig, the goats, the dogs and the chickens."

She Butted In.

A nicely dressed doll faced little girl about 5 was standing on Dearborn avenue near Lincoln Park. She carried a flaxen haired doll which must originally have had a face the replica of its young owner's, but was in a sorry condition from being battered against the wall. The little girl gave it a resounding whack just as an old lady came along.

"Child," said the benignant old lady, "why do you treat your pretty doll so?"

The child's innocent blue eyes looked indignantly up as she answered:

"I wish old women wouldn't butt in everywhere."

"My gracious!" was all the old lady said as she hurried away.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

A diplomat is a man who loves his mother-in-law—if the old lady has money.

Some girls' elbows actually look as if they had corns on them.