



The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

Every nerve in Pauline's body was vibrating, and a sense of suffocation came over her. Had this man at last seen the advertisement or been told of it? Perhaps, too, he had been to those dreadful people, Daws & Raven, and obtained from them the information that would ruin her. She turned to Jack eagerly. "Don't see them, Jack!" she said, pleadingly. "They will keep you all the afternoon, and we are so comfortable."

Jack felt that his position was hardly pleasant. If they had asked for him he ought to go to them. But still he admitted that Pauline's objection was quite natural. He could understand her wish that he should not meet Ethel more than was necessary.

"Very well," he acquiesced. "Not at home, Babette."

The Frenchwoman retraced her steps down the long gallery, with a look of deep disappointment on her face. She had expected so much from the appearance of these people. She had built on the abrupt termination of this hateful engagement through them, and now the chance was lost, utterly lost, just because she could not bring about the desired interview.

This disappointment, coming after her morning's failure at Daws' office, broke down her spirit altogether, and for the first time she began to believe that she must resign herself to the inevitable—that the marriage could not be prevented, and she must be satisfied with the poor revenge of depriving Pauline of her unlawful possessions. She clinched her teeth with defeated rage as she entered the boudoir.

"No, madame has not yet returned," she said, and held the door for them to pass out into the gallery.

But in that moment of her utter despair the tide turned and carried her on to speedy victory. She preceded Mr. and Miss Mallet until they reached the central hall, and then handed them over to the footman. She stood watching them as they reentered the hired carriage. As they drove off some one plucked at her from behind. She turned round in surprise to meet Mrs. Perkins, whom she had passed in the corridor, outside the boudoir, superintending the arranging of fresh flowers in the window stand.

The housekeeper's usually florid face was quite pale, and she looked out her words in a curious, breathless way. "Who are those people you have just shown out?"

"Mr. and Miss Mallet."

"They are nothing of the kind! The gentleman is Sir Geoffrey Malling, Baronet, brother of Sir Paul and uncle to our present mistress, and the young lady is like enough to the family to be his daughter."

The Frenchwoman stood looking at her with a gigantic triumph in her face as she muttered: "At last—at last!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"Will Mr. Mallet call on Messrs. Daws & Raven, at their offices, 16 Le Man street, E. C., between 2 and 3 o'clock to-day? They have private information of the greatest value to impart to him."

Ethel leaned over her father's shoulder and read the telegram.

"What can it mean, papa? It's very mysterious. Shall you go? I wish you would take me with you. I shall be in such a state of excitement until you come back."

"I could not think of taking you to a place I know nothing of, my dear. It might be inconvenient to have you with me."

"Why, papa, I believe you are excited and curious! It is the first time I ever saw you so interested."

"Yes, I am curious. It strikes me as odd that, after living an uneventful life for the last twenty years, I should one day break my vow as to never revisiting Mallingford Park unless as its owner, and the next day receive this curious message. I dare say it is only a coincidence; but still it is strange and I can't help connecting the one event with the other."

Surely there was some strangely exhilarating quality in the atmosphere this morning, for Ethel went about her household in a brisker manner than she had lately. Her nerves were a little bit unstrung, too, for, when about 3 o'clock there came a very decided rat-tat-tat at the door, she was worked up to such a state of extreme expectation that she almost shrieked aloud. She ran to her usual post of observation, the stair head, and was surprised, pleased, sorry, disturbed, all in a moment, at the sight of Captain Pelling.

She was almost tempted to send him a message to the effect that she could not see him just then; but she had a horror of deception, and indeed she was really glad to see him again. A few seconds later she was shaking hands with him, and her shyness had completely vanished.

brought down an avalanche upon herself.

"You see, he has a treasure beyond price in his keeping, and he guards it jealously."

For a moment the drift of his remark did not strike her; she concluded he was alluding to the secret of her father's birth, which she had thought was known only to Lord Summers. She was surprised that he should know the secret; but she said nothing, and quietly awaited an explanation.

Pelling was slightly disconcerted by her unexpected silence and her inquiring gaze. He felt that he had committed himself in some way, and honestly regretted that he had been so indiscreet; but he felt that he had gone too far to recede, and therefore went on recklessly.

"Mr. Mallet is well aware that if a man meets you often he must learn to love you."

He stopped abruptly after this, and noticed the quick flush that overspread her face; then, impelled by an irresistible impulse, he continued: "I know I ought not to say this to you without first speaking to Mr. Mallet; but he has been so kind to me that I have allowed myself to hope he would not object to me as a son-in-law, beyond the one great objection that applies to every one—I should rob him of you. Yet I would not even do that entirely. He should have his own rooms in our home, and he could be with us as often and as long as he liked. I would make both so happy, if you would let me! I would cherish you so tenderly and take such care of you that an anxious thought should never come near you, and the trouble in your face which I cannot help seeing sometimes should die from sheer inanition."

He paused, while Ethel sat quite still, her hands pressed closely together in her lap, the flush still burning in her cheek. He yearned to take her into his arms and hold her there; but, reading distress in her burning cheeks and averted eyes, he determined not to press for an answer to-day.

"I'm afraid I've worried and distressed you. I'm very sorry. I won't trouble you about it any more just now. Try to think the best you can of what I have said, and let us go on for a time as we have been, good friends." He rose from his seat, and held out his hand to her.

Ethel was touched more than she thought was possible by the usefulness of his words. He had made no allusion to his own feelings or sufferings, yet she knew the suspense he would undergo if matters were left as they stood then. She resolved to tell him everything, and let him decide.

"Don't go for a few minutes, please," she besought him, nervously. "I have something I ought to tell you. I have loved some one else very dearly."

He looked gravely and pityingly at the pretty flushed face; but there were no signs of surprise as he answered: "I guessed as much. You must forgive me for having played the spy; but I loved you so dearly from the first moment I saw you that I could not help watching you, and I found it out. I know that whoever is to blame for the breaking off of this previous engagement, it is not you; and, in spite of the fact of your having promised in the past to be the wife of another, I am longing to hear you repeat that promise to me. If you can bring yourself to do it, I will try my best to deserve my great happiness by my devotion to you."

Again the thought rose in Ethel's heart, "If I had only known this man before I knew Jack!" All that she could find words to say was: "How good you are!"

"Nay, I am afraid there is no great goodness in me; but I would try to be all goodness to you. Will you let me try?"

Should she confess that she still suffered from the pangs of a sighted love? There was a short struggle in her mind between pride and honesty. The latter prevailed, and she rose from her seat, and crossed to the fireplace. She held the mantelboard firmly by one hand, and then, regarding him steadily, she said, without a pause or tremor: "You do not understand what it is I want you to know. It is only very lately that my engagement with some one else was broken off—so lately, indeed, that I have not recovered from it. I wish you to bear this in mind—that I am still sorry about it. At the same time I know you have done me a great honor, for I think you are true and honorable, and I believe that if I had time to leave this sad memory behind me I could honestly accept you, and bring not only my gratitude, but my love to our home; as things are just now I feel it would not be right to say simply I would be your wife without letting you know how it is with me."

Poor Ethel! Her heart was laid bare now, and she trembled violently. Pelling came over to her and warmly took both her hands in his.

gone to-day, and then the matter shall be settled one way or the other."

Ethel, blushing, made no reply; and the captain, leaning forward, his face all aglow with feeling, kissed her with a gentle, lingering kiss. "Heaven bless and keep you, my darling!"

With these words ringing in her ears, Ethel watched the captain as he hastened from the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Mallet, in evident impatience, walked up and down the confined space between Daws' office table and the door. Daws had refused to say anything in the absence of the lady for whom he was waiting, and whom he expected momentarily.

The door opened behind him; and, turning round, he saw Babette breathless and flushed, unconsciously enter the room. He recognized her at once as the maid he had seen at Mallingford Park on the previous day, and he turned a dusky red as the thought that he had been entrapped into some backstairs intrigue against his niece passed through his mind.

"But I am fortunate to find you here still! I feared you would depart before my arrival."

Mr. Mallet bowed slightly, and waited for her to go on.

"Ah, I see!" cried the woman—"you are of the Malling family"—he winced—"and you have amazement in your heart that I, a mean domestic, should dare to make an appointment with you! But you will have more amazement when I tell you why I do this. Do you know your niece, Miss Maling, very well?"

Mr. Mallet drew himself up proudly. "I came here to receive information, not to answer questions. If you have brought me here thinking that I should help in any scheme against my niece, you are mistaken. If you have any news to impart which concerns me, I will listen; if not, I will wish you good afternoon."

He took his hat from the table and turned to the door.

"Not one moment! I have news to tell you—news that concerns yourself very dearly. What would you do if I were to tell you that this woman who calls herself your niece is no niece at all, that the whole estate is of right yours, that your niece is dead and buried?"

She watched him keenly; but beyond putting his hand suddenly on the back of a chair near him, he gave no sign of surprise.

"I should say that you labored under a mistake."

"I am going to show you something that will put you right on the straight track leading to this woman's downfall and your restoration to what has been yours ever since your brother's death—Mallingford Park."

Mr. Mallet drew a deep breath, and then asked, laconically: "And your price?"

Babette felt that there was a gleam in the eyes watching her from behind the table, and she looked at Daws instinctively. He mistook the look to mean, "You name the price," and he said, immediately: "One year's rent, all."

"In other words, between eleven and twelve thousand pounds?" interrogated Mr. Mallet.

Daws nodded his head affirmatively. "The affair, so far as I am concerned, is ended."

IN THE NATIONAL HALLS OF CONGRESS

Saturday, December 16.

The senate today passed the Panama emergency appropriation bill. The only change in the measure as it passed the house is a provision which requires that congress shall be supplied with regular estimates of all salaries except those paid to laborers.

Senator Dubois, of Idaho, will retain all his present committee places and secure membership on the irrigation committee.

The house indulged itself again today to the extent of four hours of what was many times termed academic discussion of Federal control of insurance.

The holiday recess was fixed from next Thursday to January 4.

Friday, December 15.

The Panama canal was again under consideration by the senate today and Tillman occupied the entire time given to that subject. He did not indicate any intention of opposition to the passage of the appropriation bill, but he criticized the methods of the canal commission in many of its transactions.

When the senate adjourned the bill was still pending, but there was an agreement for a vote tomorrow.

In the reorganization of the senate committees, now about completed, Fulton secures the chairmanship of the committee on claims, retains his place on public lands and on irrigation, and is assigned membership on one or two smaller committees. Ankeny becomes chairman of the irrigation committee and secures a place on commerce.

Piles is made chairman of coast and insular survey and given a place on public lands and territories, in which latter place he will be able to work for Alaska. Heyburn did not get a single committee asked for. The only new place given him was public buildings. The fate of Dubois is not as yet settled, the Democrats not having completed their slate.

The house today devoted 4½ hours to lively debate on the possibilities of controlling insurance.

Jones, of Washington, introduced bills appropriating \$25,000 for a fish hatchery in Yakima county, and granting Washington 50,000 acres of land for the benefit of the Soldiers' home.

Thursday, December 14.

The senate spent four hours today in discussing the Panama canal emergency appropriation bill and, when it adjourned, the bill was still under consideration. A separate bill regulating the issuance of bonds for the canal and placing them on the same basis as other bonds of the government was passed without debate.

Senator Fulton introduced a bill appropriating \$100,000 to erect a public building at Baker City, another carrying \$15,000 for improvement of the grounds at Salem, and a third to ratify the treaty with the Klamath Indians and pay them \$500,000.

The pure food bill was reported by Senator Heyburn.

The Republican members of the house caucus today unanimously declared in favor of admitting Oklahoma and Indian Territory as one state, and by a vote of 10 to 65 declared in favor of admitting Arizona and New Mexico as one state. Both statehood questions are to be contained in one bill.

Representative Cushman introduced a bill providing for the election of one delegate from Alaska to congress.

Representative Lacey, of Iowa, introduced a bill granting grazing privileges on public lands to homestead settlers and holders of small farms in semi-arid and arid lands. Prices are to range from 1 to 6 cents an acre annually.

A bill providing for a public whipping post for the District of Columbia was introduced by Adams, of Pennsylvania.

A fourth Federal judge for Alaska is provided for in a bill by Jones, of Washington.

Wednesday, December 13.

The senate was in session for only one hour and a half today, and a portion of that time was spent in the consideration of executive business.

A number of private bills were introduced in the open session, and Allison presented the report of the committee on appropriations on the canal bill, giving notice that he would call it up for consideration tomorrow. He said that the committee was of the opinion that \$11,500,000 would be sufficient for present

Rate Bill After Holidays.

Washington, Dec. 13.—Railroad rate legislation will be allowed to rest until after the holidays. Members of the house committee on interstate and foreign commerce have agreed to take up and dispose of less important measures before the recess. In the senate also there is a disposition to let rate legislation slumber. The members of the interstate commerce committee in that body have decided to hold but one meeting a week before Christmas and there is a general understanding that rate legislation will not be pushed.

No Ship Subsidy Possible.

Washington, Dec. 13.—There is to be no ship subsidy legislation at this session of congress. The senate is lukewarm. The house is opposed to such legislation. The new merchant marine committee appointed by Speaker Cannon is said to have ten members against four who are favorable to the proposed measure. The speaker is understood to oppose the project at this time, because of the likelihood of a tariff discussion.

purpose and that the amount had been left as fixed by the house.

Senator Gallinger introduced an amendment to the statehood bill to prohibit the sale of liquor in the state proposed to be created by the admission of Oklahoma and Indian Territory for a period of 21 years, and then only after an amendment of the state constitution permitting liquor traffic.

Speaker Cannon announced the transfer of Mondell (Wyoming) from the committee on military affairs to that of public lands, and of Miller (Kansas) from public lands to military affairs. The transfer gives the two members the same committee assignments they had in the last congress.

Committee reference of the annual message of President Roosevelt was made according to the subjects treated.

The question of Federal control of insurance was assigned to the committee on ways and means. In explanation of this, Payne said that, in his opinion, the only way the United States can deal with insurance companies is through the taxing power, and over this the ways and means committee has jurisdiction.

Among the bills introduced in the house today were the following: By Mondell, of Wyoming, providing for the appropriation of not more than \$20,000 annually from the sales of public lands to the endowment of state schools of mines and mining or departments of mines and mining in connection with colleges already established.

By Needham, of California, transferring the Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, General Grant, Mount Rainier, Crater Lake and Wind Cave national parks from the control of the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

By Delegate Andrews, of New Mexico, providing for the admission of the territory of New Mexico as a single state.

A bill abolishing the Isthmian Canal commission was introduced by Representative Mann, of Illinois. In its discretion is given the president to put the work of building the canal under any one of the executive departments, and also to operate the Panama railroad through the same means.

The first section, in relation to the issuance of bonds, was stricken out. A bill containing this feature was introduced in the senate by Teller, and it will be dealt with by the finance committee. The bill was amended to further provide that in the future no expenditures shall be made for the canal except by authority of congress, and when appropriations have been made by congress.

Santo Domingo Treaty Up. Washington, Dec. 13.—In the senate yesterday Talliaferro took the oath of office for his new term as senator. The senate at 12:10 p. m. went into executive session, and at 12:20 adjourned.

In executive session of the senate, Lodge moved to send back to the committee on foreign relations the treaty in relation to Santo Domingo affairs. Opposition developed, and Lodge withdrew his motion. When Lodge was asked why he desired to have the treaty sent back to the foreign relations committee, he said it might be desirable to consider the amendments that had been offered in committee. Several senators said they saw no reason why the amendments could not be considered by the senate.

Rivals For Coveted Place. Washington, Dec. 14.—As the situation sizes up today, it looks as if Senator Ankeny would secure the vacant position on the commerce committee formerly held by Senator Foster of Washington. Mr. Ankeny and Mr. Fulton have been making a neck and neck race for this place.

New Mexico Willing to Unite. Washington, Dec. 14.—Joint statehood for New Mexico and Arizona was discussed by the president today with a delegation of New Mexicans, among whom were Solomon Luna, Republican national committeeman; Major W. H. H. Llewellyn, United States District attorney; Judge A. A. Freeman and A. M. Hove. Judge Freeman said he believed the people of the two territories would be glad to accept joint statehood. Major Llewellyn and Mr. Luna took up with the president some appointments in the judiciary of New Mexico.

Cut Out Opposed Section. Washington, Dec. 14.—The Santo Domingo treaty was referred back to the committee on foreign relations. It is understood that it is the desire of the administration that the treaty be modified by striking out the provision authorizing the president to send an armed force to Santo Domingo, if at any time necessary. It is the belief of friends of the treaty that, if this provision were removed, there would be less opposition to ratification.

CANAL BILL IS FIRST.

An Emergency Appropriation Will Be Passed in Some Form. Washington, Dec. 12.—The first important measure which will involve the attention of the senate will be the Panama canal emergency appropriation bill, and its consideration will begin this week. Some senators predict that it will become a law before the close of the week, but others have expressed the opinion that final action will be deferred until the week following.

There will be no effort to prevent the passage of the bill in some shape, but there will be some opposition to the proposed restoration of the \$5,500,000 subtracted by the house from the amount to be appropriated.

Regardless of the sum, the bill will be used as a basis for the general discussion of the canal question. It is expected that the debate will deal largely with the question as to whether the canal shall be constructed on the sea level. There is some conflict of opinion as to whether the bill shall be referred to the committee on appropriations or to the committee on interoceanic canals.

The general expectation is there may be comparatively little additional legislation before the Christmas holidays. Several other measures will be vigorously pressed during the session, but with the exception of the merchant marine bill, the sponsors of the bills do not count upon getting early consideration. Senator Gallinger will call up the merchant marine bill at the first opportunity and is hopeful that debate will not be long delayed.

No one counts upon even getting a report from committees on the railroad rate bill until some time after the holidays. The three measures mentioned are considered the most important that will come before the senate this session, and they will receive much attention until they are finally disposed of.

The consideration by the senate of the joint statehood bill and the bill for the reduction of the duty on Philippine importations into the United States will necessarily be postponed until after the holidays. No one now expects any effort to modify the tariff, unless in the direction of Senator Lodge's bill providing for a maximum and minimum rate. The Massachusetts senator regards this proposal with much more favor and will press it strenuously.

TOO MUCH FREE MAIL.

Postmaster General Points Out Cause of Deficit. Washington, Dec. 12.—Postmaster General Cortelyou, in his annual report for the past fiscal year, says that while a self-sustaining condition of the postoffice would be gratifying, he is less concerned about the deficit than the efficiency of the administration. For the fiscal year 1905 the total receipts from all sources were \$152,826,585, and the total expenditures \$167,399,169, leaving a deficit of \$14,572,584. In connection with these figures the postmaster general directs attention to the increased amount of free matter handled, which he says averaged 12.58 per cent of the entire weight carried, or a loss in revenue of \$19,822,000.

"Manifestly," he says, "had the matter carried free been required to have been prepaid, notwithstanding the large expenditures for the rural free delivery service, there would have been no deficit."

Answering some of the criticisms which he says have been directed against the postal service, the postmaster general says that most of it overlooks the unusual conditions existing in this country, its great extent of territory and its widely scattered population. With the introduction of rural free delivery as yet unfinished, and other details of postal development incomplete, he thinks it the part of wisdom to proceed conservatively until the present service is more perfected.

Grist of Bills Before House. Washington, Dec. 12.—That there will be no lack of legislative proposals is indicated by the 5,963 bills which have already been introduced in the house since the opening of this session. Many of these are known as private bills, affecting only individual interests. The holiday adjournment, it is believed, will be fixed on as Thursday, December 21. Leaders are disposed to expedite consideration of the Philippine tariff bill and hearings will undoubtedly begin as soon as the ways and means committee has organized.

Boycott All Foreigners. Shanghai, Dec. 12.—As the result of a dispute over a kidnapping case in a mixed court between Chinese magistrates and the municipal police, a fight followed. The Chinese of the city became greatly excited and held meetings at which 3,000 merchants declared that a boycott on foreign goods be begun at once and that taxes would not be paid unless the police inspectors concerned in the dispute are removed forthwith. The situation is serious.

Powers Asked to Intercede. Antwerp, Dec. 12.—A group of international lawyers is endeavoring to induce the powers to intercede with the Turkish government in the case of Edward Jors, a Belgian, who was condemned to death by a native court at Constantinople for alleged participation in an attempt to assassinate the sultan in July last.

Mutiny in Penitentiary. Havana, Dec. 12.—The convicts in the penitentiary mutinied tonight and a fierce fight between them and the guards followed, in which two of the prisoners were mortally wounded, 16 more or less seriously wounded and three of the guards slightly injured.