

The Filigree Ball

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,
Author of "The Mystery of Agatha Webb," "Lest Man's Lane," Etc.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE appearance of this witness had undergone a change since she last stood before us. She was shamed-faced still, but her manner showed resolve and a feverish determination to face the situation which could but awaken in the breasts of those who had Mr. Jeffrey's honor and personal welfare at heart a nameless dread, as if they already foresaw the dark shadow which minute by minute was slowly sinking over a household which up to a week ago had been the envy and admiration of all Washington society.

The first answer she made revealed both the cause of her shame and the reason of her firmness. It was in response to the question whether she, Loretta, had seen Miss Tuttle before she went out on the walk she was said to have taken immediately after Mrs. Jeffrey's final departure from the house.

Her words were these:

"I did, sir. I do not think Miss Tuttle knows it, but I saw her in Mrs. Jeffrey's room. I am not especially proud of what I did that night, but I was led into it by degrees, and I am sure I beg the lady's pardon." And then she went on to relate how after she had seen Mrs. Jeffrey leave the house she went into her room with the intention of putting it to rights. As this was no more than her duty, no fault could be found with her, but she owned that when she had finished this task and removed all evidence of Mrs. Jeffrey's frenzied condition she had no

business to linger at the table turning over the letters she found lying there.

Her cheeks were burning now, for she had found herself obliged to admit that she had read enough of these letters to be sure that they had no reference to the quarrel then pending between her mistress and Mr. Jeffrey. Her eyes fell and she looked seriously distressed as she went on to say that she was as conscious then as now of having no business with these papers; so conscious, indeed, that when she heard Miss Tuttle's step at the door, her one idea was to hide herself.

That she could stand and face that lady never so much as occurred to her. Her own guilty consciousness made her cheeks too hot for her to wish to meet an eye which had never rested on her any too kindly; so nothing but straight the curtains fell over one of the windows on the opposite side of the room, she dashed toward it and slipped in out of sight just as Miss Tuttle came in. This window was one seldom used, owing to the fact that it overlooked an adjoining wall, so she had no fear of Miss Tuttle approaching it. Consequently, she could stand there quite at her ease, and, as the curtains in falling behind her, had not come quite together, she really could not help seeing what that lady did.

Here the witness paused with every appearance of looking for some token of disapprobation from the crowd.

But she encountered nothing there but eager anxiety for her to proceed, so without waiting for the coroner's question, she added in so many words: "She went first to the bookshelves."

We had expected it; but yet a general movement took place, and a few suppressed exclamations could be heard.

"And what did she do there?"

"Took down a book, after looking carefully up and down the shelves."

"What color of book?"

"A green one with red figures on it. I could see the cover plainly as she took it down."

"Like this one?"

"Exactly like that one."

"And what did she do with this book?"

"Opened it, but not to read it. She was too quick in closing it for that."

"Did she take the book away?"

"No; she put it back on the shelf."

"After opening and closing it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see whether she put anything into the book?"

"I cannot swear that she did, but then her back was to me, and I could not have seen it if she had."

The implied suggestion caused some excitement, but the coroner, frowning

she paused before a large bureau. As this bureau was devoted entirely to Mr. Jeffrey's use, Loretta experienced some surprise at seeing his wife's sister approach it in so stealthy a manner. Consequently she was watching with all her might when this young lady opened the upper drawer and with very evident emotion thrust her hand into it.

What she took out or whether she took out anything this spy upon her movements could not say, for when Loretta heard the drawer being pushed back into place she drew the curtains close, perceiving that Miss Tuttle would have to face this widow in coming back. However, she ventured upon one other peep through them just as that lady was leaving the room and remembered as if it were yesterday how clay white her face looked and how she held her left hand pressed close against the folds of her dress. It was but a few minutes after that Miss Tuttle left the house.

As we all knew what was kept in that drawer, the conclusion was obvious. She wished to see if his pistol was still there or if it had been taken away by her sister.

The temerity which had made it possible to associate the name of such a man as Francis Jeffrey with an outrageous crime having been thus in a measure explained, the coroner recalled that gentleman and again thoroughly surprised the gaping public.

Had the witness accompanied his wife to the Moore house?

"No."

Had he met her there by any appointment he had made with her or which had been made for them both by some third person?

"No."

Had he been at the Moore house on the night of the 11th at any time previous to the hour when he was brought there by the officials?

"No."

Would he glance at this impression of certain finger tips which had been left in the dust of the southwest chamber mantel?

He had already noted them.

Now would he place his left hand on the paper and see—

"It is not necessary," he burst forth, in great heat. "I own to those marks. That is, I have no doubt they were made by my hand." Here, unconsciously, his eyes flew to the member

thus referred to, as if conscious that in some way it had proved a traitor to him; after which his gaze traveled slowly my way, with an indescribable question in it which roused my conscience and made the trick by which I had got the impression of his hand seem less of a triumph than I had heretofore considered it. The next minute he was answering the coroner under oath, very much as he had answered him in the unofficial interview at which I had been present.

"I acknowledge having been in the Moore house and even having been in its southwest chamber, but not at the time supposed. It was on the previous night." He went on to relate how, being in a nervous condition and having the key to this old dwelling in his pocket, he had amused himself by going through its dilapidated interior. All of this made a doubtful impression which was greatly emphasized when, in reply to the inquiry as to where he got the light to see by, he admitted that he had come upon a candle in an upstairs room and made use of that; though he could not remember what he had done with this candle afterward, and looked dazed and quite at sea, till the coroner suggested that he might have carried it into the closet of the room where his fingers had left their impression in the dust of the mantel-shelf.

Then he broke down like a man from whom some prop is suddenly snatched and looked around for a seat. This was given him, while a silence, the most dreadful I ever experienced, held every one there in check. But he speedily rallied and, with the remark that he was a little confused in regard to the incidents of that night, waited with a wild look in his averted eye for the coroner's next question.

Unhappily for him, it was in continuation of the same subject. Had he bought candles or not at the grocer's around the corner? Yes, he had. Before visiting the house? Yes. Had he also bought matches? Yes. What kind? Common safety matches. Had he noticed when he got home that the box he had just bought was half empty? No. Nevertheless he had used many matches in going through this old house, had he not? Possibly. To light his way upstairs, perhaps? It might be. Had he not so used them? Yes. Why had he done so if he had candles in his pocket, which were so much easier to hold and so much more lasting than a lighted match? Ah, he could not say; he did not know; his mind was confused. He was awake when he should have been asleep. It was all a dream to him.

The coroner became still more persistent.

"Did you enter the library on your solitary visit to this old house?"

"I believe so."

"What did you do there?"

"Pattered around. I don't remember."

on this, pressed the girl to continue, asking if Miss Tuttle left the room immediately after turning from the bookshelves. Loretta replied no; that, on the contrary, she stood for some minutes near them, gazing in what seemed like a great distress of mind straight upon the floor, after which she moved in an agitated way and with more than one anxious look behind her into the adjoining room, where

Loretta's testimony creates a sensation



"What light did you use?"

"A candle, I think."

"You must know."

"Well, I had a candle. It was in a candelabrum."

"What candle and what candelabrum?"

"The same I used upstairs, of course."

"And you cannot remember where you left this candle and candelabrum when you finally quitted the house?"

"No. I wasn't thinking about candles."

"What were you thinking about?"

"The rupture with my wife and the bad name of the house I was in."

"Oh! And this was on Tuesday night?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you prove this to us?"

"I cannot."

"But you swear?"

"I swear that it was Tuesday night, the night immediately preceding the one when—when my wife's death robbed me of all earthly happiness."

It was feelingly uttered, and several faces lightened; but the coroner repeating, "Is there no way you can prove this to our satisfaction?" the shadow settled again, and on no head more perceptibly than on that of the unfortunate witness.

It was now late in the day and the atmosphere of the room had become stifling, but no one seemed to be conscious of any discomfort, and a general gasp of excitement passed through the room when the coroner, taking out a box from under a pile of papers, disclosed to the general gaze the famous white ribbon with its dainty bow, lying on top of the fatal pistol.

That this special feature, the most interesting one of all connected with

this tragedy, should have been kept so long in reserve and brought out just at this time, struck many of Mr. Jeffrey's closest friends as unnecessarily dramatic; but when the coroner, lifting out the ribbon, remarked tentatively, "You know this ribbon?" we were more struck by the involuntary cry of surprise which rose from some one in the crowd about the door than by the look with which Mr. Jeffrey eyed it and made the necessary reply. That cry had something more than nervous excitement in it. Identifying the person who had uttered it as a certain busy little woman well known in town, I sent an officer to watch her; then recalled my attention to the point where the coroner was attempting to make. He had forced Mr. Jeffrey to recognize the ribbon as the one which had fastened the pistol to his wife's arm. Now he asked whether, in his opinion, a woman could tie such a bow to her own wrist, and when in common justice Mr. Jeffrey was obliged to say no, waited a third time before he put the general suspicion again into words:

"Can you not, by some means or some witness, prove to us that it was on Tuesday night and not on Wednesday you spent the hours you speak of on this scene of your marriage and your wife's death?"

The hopelessness which more than once had marked Mr. Jeffrey's features since the beginning of this inquiry reappeared with renewed force as this suggestive question fell again upon his ears, and he was about to repeat his plea of forgetfulness when the coroner's attention was diverted by a request made in his ear by one of the detectives. In another moment Mr. Jeffrey had been waved aside and a new witness sworn in.

You can imagine every one's surprise, mine most of all, when this witness proved to be Uncle David.

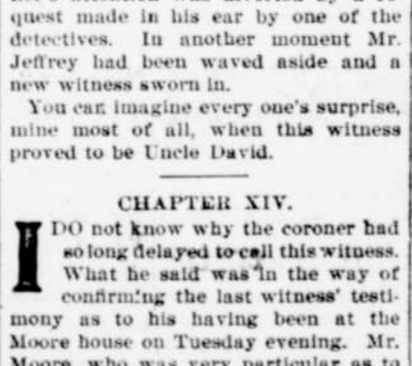
CHAPTER XIV.

I DO not know why the coroner had so long delayed to call this witness. What he said was in the way of confirming the last witness' testimony as to his having been at the Moore house on Tuesday evening. Mr. Moore, who was very particular as to dates and days, admitted that the light which he had seen in a certain window of his ancestral home on the evening when he summoned the police was but the repetition of one he had detected there the evening before. It was this repetition which alarmed him and caused him to break through all his usual habits and leave his home at night to notify the police.

The coroner asked him if he had seen Mr. Jeffrey go in on the night in question; if he had ever seen any one go in there since the wedding, or even if he had seen any one loitering about the steps or sneaking into the rear yard. But the answer was always no; these same noses growing more and more emphatic, and the gentleman more and more impregnable and dignified as the examination went on. In fact, he was as unassailable a witness as I have ever heard testify before any jury. Beyond the fact already mentioned of his having observed a light in the opposite house on the two evenings in question he admitted nothing. His life in the little cottage was so engrossing, he had his organ, his dog, why should he look out of the window? Had it not been for his usual habit of letting his dog run the pavements for a quarter of an hour before finally locking up for the night he would not have seen as much as he did.

"Have you any stated hour for doing this?" the coroner now asked.

Phil Tallman



ed. The rest of the afternoon and all the evening were spent in listening to Silas Bebee's history, covering a period of some fifty-six years. Mr. Graves made copious notes and nodded his head from time to time, and all went well with the story. Bedtime had come, and Silas had given in sufficient matter for his ten pages when his wife, who had all along been doing a heap of thinking, rose and inquired:

"Silas, am I to be left out of this thing as if I didn't amount to shucks? If I haven't helped you to be the biggest toad in the puddle, who has?"

"They never say anything in books about big women, do they?" he asked of Mr. Graves.

"Well, very seldom," was the reply. "I believe they have mentioned Cleopatra and one or two others, but those were exceptional cases. Still, as your wife says—"

The result was that Mrs. Silas Bebee was given three pages and a portrait in the book, all for the sum of \$8 cash in advance, and the clerk had struck midnight before she had got through telling how often she had had rheumatism, hysterics and bronchitis and how many yards of rag carpet and barrels of soft soap she had made during her married life. There was a son in the family named Joe. He had nothing to say that evening, but he got up next morning to claim his rights. As the son of Bebee and the biggest Bebee of them all, he wanted to be known of men, and it was finally decided that he should have two pages and a portrait for \$5. It was dog cheap, and Mr. Graves would lose money on it, but he had started out to see the Bebee family through and must do it even if he went broke. It took him three days to get through with the family, during which he had free board and lodgings as a matter of course, and then he headed for the house of Reuben. It was understood that he must call there to ask Reuben his exact age, but he must not go beyond that. Reuben was

in the cornfield with his hoe, and he issued against the fence and heard what the publisher had to say and then replied:

"By gum, but I always knew Silas Bebee was a sneak, and now it's proved! He wants folks to think he's the big Bebee, does he? Wants the world to believe that all the other Bebees stand around and look at him with their mouths open? Well, I'll bust up his little circus for him!"

Mr. Graves had struck a good thing, and he was the man to push it. Reuben wanted more pages than Silas had. His sons wanted to spread out in a liberal manner, and Mr. Graves fixed matters to suit them and himself. He had free board and lodgings for four days and departed with cash enough to buy a fur lined overcoat for the next winter. In honor bound, as he informed Reuben, he must call on Salathiel Bebee, but only to make sure whether his grandfather was bitten by a mad dog in the state of Ohio or Michigan. He called. Salathiel was uprooting the pigweeds which had crept into his garden, and when Mr. Graves had explained the biography business to him he straightened up and said:

"You kin pass right on. I ain't buyin' no gold bricks today."

But Mr. Graves didn't pass. He showed the contracts entered into with Silas and Reuben, and he added the remark that it was too bad there were only two eminent families of Bebees. Then Salathiel struck the trunk of a cherry tree with his fist and exclaimed:

"By John Rodgers, but the idea of them Bebees passin' themselves off the smartest and best in America! They do know how to farm, and I won't go for to deny it, but as for bein' big gun* they ain't knee high. I'm no hand to brag, but if I don't lay over Silas and Reube every day in the week then you kin kick me clear across the barnyard."

The rest was easy, of course. There were Salathiel, his wife and two sons and two daughters, and all had to go into that book regardless of space or cost. Mr. Graves was not an impetuous man, and he took his time writing out his notes and managed to get five days' free board and lodgings. Then he departed to "work" Moses, Abraham, Joab, Peter, Paul and several other Bebees, securing victims in each and every family and in one instance taking in everything from the grandmother down to the infant in the cradle. He put in a full month at his work, and he had the best beds and the best meals. After his coming the Bebees no longer neighbored, and they passed each other with their heads held high and their noses turned up. In one or two cases the young men came to blows, and lawsuits were started over old matters. Things were edging along toward a grievous state of affairs when Mr. Graves and his notes and his money departed, and three days later a detective arrived in search of him and exposed him as a swindler. The Bebees didn't want to and couldn't believe it at first, but the evidence submitted was too strong for them to stand against, and after a due amount of weeping and wailing and swearing a meeting of all the families was held, and it was unanimously

"Resolved, that while the Bebees date back to the year 900 this year saw the whole darn caboodle making fools of themselves without reason or excuse, and we won't do it again."

Dashed to Earth Again.

"It's real interesting to read about these folks that lived in mythological times," said Mr. Cobb as he put a slip of paper in his library book and shut it carefully. "Seems as if 9 o'clock came quicker than ever I knew it to before."

Mrs. Cobb was putting a large patch on one elbow of her waist, and she held it close to the lamp in what seemed to her husband an ostentatious way. He turned sidewise in his chair to avoid the view.

"There was that feller Atlas," he said, musing. "He was strong beyond anything that we have nowadays. Why, he supported the heavens on his head and hands; held 'em up in place till they got kind of set, I judge. What muscle such a man as that must have had!" And Mr. Cobb doubled his right flat and brought it up to his shoulder while the fingers of his left hand felt his arm with apparent satisfaction.

"What an appetite he must have had!" said Mrs. Cobb tartly. "And while he was supporting the heavens—work the Lord could have done without any of his help—I'll risk but what his wife was supporting him! And tomorrow I guess your cold'll be well enough so you can go over to the squire's and begin on that wood they want chopped and piled."

A Salivini Incident.

The late Alexander Salivini was once playing Hamlet in a small Wisconsin town. The theater was the crudest of structures, and the stage had been contrived for the occasion by the simple device of elevating a platform on four posts. When the gravedigging scene was reached a draft of cold air blew up through the aperture in the stage and not only caused the gravediggers' teeth to chatter, but played freaks with their garments.

Salivini, entering with Horatio, heard from the grave only a strange jumble of words bitten in pieces by the first clown's clicking teeth. But when he saw the loose garments of the workmen flapping jocularly in the breeze the irrelevant sight was too much for him, and laughter checked his speech. He tried to say, "Eas this fellow no feeling of his business that he sings at gravemaking?" but he had to turn his face away from the audience and laugh, while the gravediggers carried the scene along with much fuss of occupation with pick and spade till Hamlet had discovered his gravity.

BIOGRAPHIES WANTED

By CYRUS DERICKSON

The Bebee Settlement was so called because so many farmers of that name, and all related, had settled there. It was at peace with all mankind and the farmers being their corn when something like a cloudburst happened. A stranger arrived at the house of Silas Bebee and sat down to a boiled dinner with him and afterward held a long and interesting conversation. Mr. Graves, as the stranger gave his name, was one of the partners in a big publishing house which made a specialty of publishing the biographies of the old and eminent families of America. The name of Bebee, as he had discovered by long and patient research, dated back to the year 900 and had been borne by princes, dukes, counts, barons, poets and soldiers. What Mr. Graves wanted was to bring the Bebee biography down to Silas and let the world know that the family was still on tap and as eminent as in days of yore. He wanted to fill at least ten pages of the gilt backed book he was getting out with the sayings and doings of Silas, while the eleventh page should be taken up with a full length portrait of the sturdy old farmer. The biography and the portrait would be free, but in order to cover the cost of the glue and the stitching Silas would have to come down with \$25 in cash.

"I don't think I'll trade," was the reply when the caller had stated his case. Mr. Graves seemed to have prepared himself for just such an answer, and he turned away with:

"Very well, Mr. Bebee. As you are the most prominent of the family, I naturally came to you first, but as you don't care for the honors I shall go to Reuben. I think he will jump at the opportunity, being as he wants to be elected county supervisor next year. Good day, Mr. Bebee."

There wasn't a feeling of brotherly love between Silas and Reuben. Both wanted to "run things," and naturally that brought about a clash. Silas had some thoughts of running for county supervisor himself, and it was news to him and news he did not like that Reuben was planning to mix in. He did some rapid thinking. Mr. Graves had not climbed into his buggy when he was called back and a bargain concluded.

"Tallman! Let us have Tallman!"

Of course he met with an instant rebuke, but I did not wait to hear it or to see order restored, for a glance from the coroner had already sent me to the door in search of this new witness.

My destination was the Cosmos club, for Phil Tallman and his habits and haunts were as well known in Washington as the figure of Liberty on the summit of the capitol dome. When I saw him I did not wonder. Never have



I seen a more amiable looking man or one with a more absentminded expression. To my query as to whether he had ever met Mr. Jeffrey at or near the entrance of Rock Creek cemetery he replied with an amazed look and the quick response:

"Of course I did. It was the very night that his wife— But what's up? You look excited for a detective."

"Come to the morgue and see. This testimony of yours will prove invaluable to Mr. Jeffrey."

The result was an absolute proof that Mr. Jeffrey had been near Soldiers' home as late as 7, which was barely fifteen minutes previous to the hour Mrs. Jeffrey's watch was stopped by her fall in the old house on Waver-

Countined

Knows It All.

"Biographies is very opinionated. He thinks that nobody can teach him anything."

"Well," answered Miss Cayenne politely, "I guess he is about right."

Washington Star.

Time never drags, but does life even seem to pass to those who are so busy thinking that they are not living?

A call for Tallman

could tell if only I could remember his name." Suddenly, with a loud cry which escaped him involuntarily, he gave a gurgling laugh, and we heard the name "Tallman" leap from his lips.

The witness had at last remembered whom he had met at the cemetery gate at the hour or near the hour his wife lay dying in the lower part of the city.

The effect was electrical. One of the spectators—some country boor, no doubt—so far forgot himself as to cry out loud enough for all to hear:

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