The Woman In the Alcove

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,

Author of "The Millionaire Baby," "The Filigree Ball," "The House in the Mist," "The Amethyst Box," Etc.

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CHAPTER XV—(Continued.)

...e murmured, "I know ...it will come, at least I think so." ...his should have reassured me, no ...k, and sent me away quiet and ...e. But something—the tenacity of ...ery conviction, possibly—kept me ...ering before the inspector and ...ally gave me the courage to say:

"I know I ought not to speak another ...d; that I am putting myself at a ...disadvantage in doing so, but I cannot ...p it, inspector. I cannot help it ...e I see you laying such stress upon ...few indirect clews connecting the ...

...ious Sears with this ...rime, and ...ring the direct clews we have ...ust one whom we need not name." ...d I gone too far? Had my pre...ption transgressed all bounds and ...ld he show a very natural anger? ...e smiled instead, an enigmatical ...e no doubt, which I found it diffi... to understand, but yet a smile.

"You insist," he suggested, "that ...re possible connection with the ...e cannot eliminate Mr. Grey's very ...ire one. Nor can the fact that ...llgood's hand came in contact with ...Grey's at or near the time of the ...hange of the false stone with the ...make it any less evident who was ...guilty author of this exchange."

...he inspector's hand was on the door ...b, but he dropped it at this and, ...eying me very quietly, said:

"I thought that a few days spent at ...bedside of Miss Grey in the society ...so renowned and cultured a gentle...n as her father would disabuse you ...these damaging suspicions."

"I don't wonder that you thought so," ...st out. "You would think so all ...more if you knew how kind he can ...and what solicitude he shows for

...inspector's hand was on the door knob.

...about him. But I cannot get over ...facts. They all point, it seems to ...straight in one direction."

"All? You heard what was said in ...room—I saw it in your eye—how ...man who surprised the steward in ...own room last night heard him ...ing of love and death in connection ...Mrs. Fairbrother. 'To kiss what ...ate! It is almost as bad as to Wil... I love'—he said something like ..."

"Yes, I heard that. But did he mean ...he had been her actual slayer? ...d you convict him on those ...ds?"

"Well, we shall find out. Then, as to ...llgood's part in the little business, ...choose to consider that it took ...e at the time the stone fell from ...Grey's hand. What proof have ...that the substitution you believe ...was not made by him? He could ...ly have done it while crossing the ...m to Mr. Grey's side."

"Inspector!" Then hotly, as the ab...dity of the suggestion struck me ...h full force: "He do this! A wait..., as you think, Mr. Fairbrother's ...rd, to be provided with so hard...ne-by an article as this counter...of a great stone? Isn't that a... as incredible a supposition as ...I have myself presumed to ad...?"

"Possibly, but the affair is full of in...alities, the greatest of which, to ...mind, is the persistence with whic... a kind hearted enough little wo... perverse in ascribing the deep...guilt to one you profess to admire ...certainly would be glad to find in...ent of any complicity with a great ..."

"I felt that I must justify myself.

"Mr. Durand has had no such con...ation shown him," said I.

"I know, my child, I know; but tha... differ. Wouldn't it be well for ...to see this and be satisfied with ...facts which things have taken with ...unwilling to insist upon involv... Mr. Grey in your suspicions?"

...ome took off the edge of this re...k, but I felt it keenly. And only tha... I had in his fairness as a ...and public official enabled me to ...

...confidentia... ...glad to per...ing to talk to all I had ... I wanted help but speak... ...is my only safety. ...have to sit ir... ...with my ...all shaken up. It is killing ...But I think I should go ...ck on ...tent if you will listen to one more sug...gestion I have to make. It is my last."

"Say it. I am nothing if not indulgent."

He had spoken the word. Indulgent, that was it. He let me speak, probably had let me speak from the first, from pure kindness. He did not believe one little bit in my good sense of logic. But I was not to be deterred. I would empty my mind of the ...hing that lay there. I would leave ...ferment and work their evil way with...me in the dead watches of the night which I had yet to face. So I took him at his word.

"I only want to ask this. In case Sears is innocent of the crime, who wrote the warning and where did the assassin get the stiletto with the ...arms closed over its handle? And the diamond? Will the diamond? You hint that he stole that, too. That with some idea of its proving useful to him on this grand occasion he had provided himself with an imitation stone, setting and all—he who has never shown, so far as we have heard, any interest in Mrs. Fairbrother's diamond, only in Mrs. Fairbrother herself. If Wellgood is Sears and Sears the medium by which the false stone was exchanged for the real, then he made this exchange in Mr. Grey's interests and not his own. But I don't believe he had anything to do with it. I think everything goes to show that the exchange was made by Mr. Grey himself."

"A second Daniel," muttered the inspector lightly. "Go on, little lawyer." But, for all this attempt at banter on his part, I imagined that I saw the beginning of a very natural anxiety to close the conversation. I therefore hastened with what I had yet to say, cutting my words short and almost stammering in my eagerness.

"Remember the perfection of that imitation s... a copy so exact that it extends to the setting. That shows plan—forgive me if I repeat myself—preparation, a knowledge of stones, a particular knowledge of this one. Mr. Fairbrother's steward may have had the knowledge, but he would have been a fool to have used his knowledge to secure for himself a valuable he could never have found a purchaser for in any market. But a fancier—one who has his pleasure in the mere possession of a unique and invaluable gem—ah, that is different! He might risk a crime. History tells us of several."

Here I paused to take breath, which gave the inspector a chance to say:

"In other words, this is what you think. The Englishman, desirous of covering up his tracks, conceived the idea of having this imitation on hand, in case it might be of use in the daring and disgraceful undertaking you ascribe to him. Recognizing his own inability to do this himself, he delegated the task to one who in some way, he had been led to think, cherished a secret grudge against its present possessor—a man who had had some opportunity for seeing the stone and studying the setting. The copy thus procured, Mr. Grey went to the ball, and, relying on his own seemingly unassailable position, attacked Mrs. Fairbrother in the alcove and would have carried off the diamond, if he had found it where he had seen it earlier blazing on her breast. But it was not there. The warning received by her—a warning you ascribe to his daughter, a fact which is yet to be proved—had led her to rid herself of the jewel in the way Mr. Durand describes, and he found himself burdened with a dastardly crime and with nothing to show for it. Later, however, to his intense surprise and possible satisfaction, he saw that diamond in my hands, and, recognizing an opportunity, as he thought, of yet securing it, he asked to see it, held it for an instant, and then, making use of an almost incredible expedient for distracting attention, dropped, not the real stone but the false one, retaining the real one in his hand. This, in plain English, as I take it, is your present idea of the situation."

Astonished at the clearness with which he read my mind, I answered, "Yes, inspector, that is what was in my mind."

"Good! Then it is just as well that I is out. Your mind is now free and you can give it entirely to your duties." Then, as he laid his hand on the door knob, he added: "In studying so intently your own point of view, you seem to have forgotten that the last thing which Mr. Grey would be likely to do, under these circumstances, would be to call attention to the falsity of the ... upon whose similarity to the real stone he was depending. Not even his confidence in his own position, as an ... and lightly esteemed guest, would lead him to do that."

"Not if he were a well known ... man," I faltered, with the sensation of one who has ... the ... ...He ... ...would ... ...not stand getting ... further—you ... ...

...wise old official expected. He had let me talk, and the inevitable reaction followed. I could now see only Mr. Grey's goodness and claims to respect, and began to hate myself that I had not been immediately impressed by the inspector's views, and shown myself more willing to drop every suspicion against the august personage I had presumed to associate with crime. What had given me the strength to persist? Loyalty to my lover? His innocence had not been involved. Indeed, every word uttered in the inspector's office had gone to prove that he no longer occupied a leading place in police calculations; that their eyes were turned elsewhere, and that I had only to be patient to see Mr. Durand quite cleared in their minds.

But was this really so? Was he as safe as that? What if this new clew failed? What if they failed to find Sears or lay hands on the doubtful Wellgood? Would Mr. Durand be released without a trial? Should we hear nothing more of the strange and, to many, the suspicious circumstances which linked him to this crime? It would be expecting too much from either police or official discrimination.

No; Mr. Durand would never be completely exonerated till the true culprit was found and all explanations made. I had therefore been simply fighting his battles when I pointed out what I thought to be the weak place in their present theory, and, sore as I felt in contemplation of my seemingly heartless action, I was not the unimpressionable, middle-pated nonentity I must have seemed to the inspector.

Yet my comfort was small and the effort it took to face Mr. Grey and my young patient was much greater than I had anticipated. I blushed as I approached to take my place at Miss Grey's bedside, and, had her father been as suspicious of me at that moment as I was of him, I am sure that I should have fared badly in his thoughts.

But he was not on the watch for my emotions. He was simply relieved to see me back. I noticed this immediately; also that something had occurred during my absence which absorbed his thought and filled him with anxiety.

A Western Union envelope lay at his feet—proof that he had just received a telegram. This under ordinary circumstances would not have occasioned me a second thought, such a man being naturally the recipient of all sorts of communications from all parts of the world, but at this crisis, with the worm of a half stifled doubt still gnawing at my heart, everything that occurred to him took on importance and roused questions.

When he had left the room, Miss Grey nestled up to me with the seemingly ingenuous remark:

"Poor papa! Something disturbs him. He will not tell me what. I suppose he thinks I am not strong enough to share his troubles, but I shall be soon. Don't you see I am gaining every day?"

"Indeed I do," was my hearty response. In face of such a sweet confidence and open affection doubt vanished, and I was able to give all my thoughts to her.

"I wish papa felt as sure of this as you do," she said. "For some reason he does not seem to take any comfort from my improvement. When Dr. Freligh says, 'Well, well, we are getting on finely today!' I notice that he does not look less anxious, nor does he even meet these encouraging words with a smile. Haven't you noticed it? He looks as careworn and troubled about me now as he did the first day I was taken sick. Why should he? Is it because he has lost so many children he cannot believe in his good fortune at having the most insignificant of all left to him?"

"I do not know your father very well," I protested, "and cannot judge what is going on in his mind, but he must see that you are quite a different girl from what you were a week ago and that, if nothing unforeseen happens, your recovery will only be a matter of a week or two longer."

"Oh, how I love to hear you say that! To be well again! To read letters!" she murmured, "and to write them!" And I saw the delicate hand falter up to pinch the precious packet awaiting that happy hour. I did not like to discuss her father with her, so took this opportunity to turn the conversation aside into safer channels. But we had not proceeded far before Mr. Grey returned and, taking his stand at the foot of the bed, remarked, after a moment's gloomy contemplation of his daughter's face:

"You are better today, the doctor says. I have just been telephoning to him. But do you feel well enough for me to leave you for a few days? There is a man I must see—must go to, if you have no dread of being left alone with your good nurse and the doctor's constant attendance."

Miss Grey looked startled. Doubtless she found it difficult to understand what man in this strange country could interest her father enough to induce him to leave her while he was yet laboring under such solicitude. But a smile speedily took the place of her look of surprised inquiry, and she affectionately exclaimed:

"Oh, I haven't the least dread in the world, not now. See, I can hold up my arms. Go, papa, go! It will give me a chance to surprise you with my good looks when you come back."

He turned abruptly away. He was suffering from an emotion deeper than he cared to acknowledge. But he gained control over himself speedily and, coming back, announced with forced decision:

"I shall have to go tonight. I have no choice. Promise me that you will not get lonely in my absence, that you will strive to get well, that you will put all your mind into striving to get well."

"Indeed I will," she answered, a little frightened by the feeling he showed. "Don't worry so much. I have more than one reason for living, papa."

He shook his head and went immediately to make his preparations for departure. His daughter gave one sob, then caught me by the hand.

"You look dumfounded," said she. "But never mind, we shall get on very well together. I have the most perfect confidence in you."

Was it my duty to let the inspector know that Mr. Grey anticipated absenting himself from the city for a few days? I decided that I would only be impressing my own doubts upon him after a rebuke which should have allayed them.

Yet when Mr. Grey came to take his departure I wished that the inspector might have been a witness to his emotion, if only to give me one of his very excellent explanations. The parting was more like that of one who sees no immediate promise of return than of a traveler who intends to quit his stay to a few days. He looked her in the eyes and kissed her a dozen times, each time with an air of heartbreak which was good neither for her nor for himself, and when he finally tore himself away it was to look back at her from the door with an expression I was glad she did not see or it would certainly have interfered with the promise she had made to concentrate all her energies on getting well.

What was at the root of his extreme grief at leaving her? Did he fear the person he was going to meet or were his plans such as involved a much longer stay than he had mentioned? Did he even mean to return at all?

Ah, that was the question! Did he intend to return or had I been the unconscious witness of a flight?

CHAPTER XVII.

A FEW days later three men were closeted in the district attorney's office. Two of them were officials—the district attorney himself and our old friend the inspector. The third was the detective, Sweetwater, chosen by them to keep watch on Mr. Grey.

Sweetwater had just come to town. This was evident from the gripsack he had set down in a corner on entering; also from a certain tousled appearance which bespoke hasty rising and but few facilities for proper attention to his person. These details counted little, however, in the astonishment created by his manner. For a hardy chap he looked strangely nervous and undisposed—so much so that after the first short greeting the inspector asked him what was up and if he had had another Fairbrother house experience.

He replied with a decided no; that it was not his adventure which had upset him, but the news he had to bring.

Here he glanced at every door and window, and then, leaning forward over the table at which the two officials sat, he brought his head as nearly to them as possible and whispered five words.

They produced a most unhappy sensation. Both the men, hardened as they were by duties which soon sap the sensibilities, started and turned as pale as the speaker himself. Then the district attorney, with one glance at the inspector, rose and locked the door.

It was a prelude to this tale which I give, not as it came from his mouth,

"I want you to get me a room at a very quiet hotel."

but as it was afterward related to me. The language, I fear, is mostly my own.

The detective had just been with Mr. Grey to the coast of Maine. Why there will presently appear. His task had been to follow this gentleman, and follow him he did.

Mr. Grey was a very stately man, difficult of approach, and was absorbed besides by some overwhelming care. But this fellow was one in a thousand and somehow during the trip he managed to do him some little service, which drew the attention of the great man to himself. This done, he so improved his opportunity that the two were soon on the best of terms, and he learned that the Englishman was without a valet, and, being unaccustomed to move about without one, felt the awkwardness of his position very much. This gave Sweetwater his cue, and when he found that the services of such a man were wanted only during the present trip and for the handling of affairs quite apart from personal attendance upon the gentleman himself, he showed such an honest desire to fill the place, and made out to give such a good account of himself, that he found himself engaged for the work before reaching C—.

This was a great stroke of luck, he thought, but he little knew how big a stroke of luck what a series of adventures it was going to lead him.

Once on the platform of the small station at which Mr. Grey had bidden him to stop, he noticed two things—the utter helplessness of the man in all practical matters and his extreme anxiety to see all that was going on about him without being himself seen. There was method in this curiosity, too much method. Women did not interest him in the least. They could pass and repass without arousing his attention, but the moment a man stepped his way, he shrank from him only to betray the greatest curiosity concerning him the moment he felt it safe to turn and observe him. All of which convinced Sweetwater that the Englishman's errand was in connection with a man whom he equally dreaded and desired to meet.

Of this he was made absolutely certain a little later. As they were leaving the depot with the rest of the arrivals Mr. Grey said:

"I want you to get me a room at a very quiet hotel. This done, you are to hunt up the man whose name you will find written in this paper, and when you have found him make up your mind how it will be possible for me to get a good look at him without his getting any sort of a look at me. Do this and you will earn a week's salary in one day."

Sweetwater, with his head in air and his heart on fire—for matters were looking very promising indeed—took the paper and put it in his pocket; then he began to hunt for a hotel. Not till he had found what he wished and installed the Englishman in his room did he venture to open the precious memorandum and read the name he had been speculating over for an hour. It was not the one he had anticipated, but it came near to it. It was that of James Wellgood.

(Continued Next Friday.)

SPECIAL CITY ELECTION

Notice is hereby given that a special election will be held in the city of Eugene, Saturday, April 18th, 1908, at which the following propositions will be submitted to the legal voters of the city for approval or rejection:

1. An initiative bill filed in the office of the city recorder January 4, 1908, providing for the amendment of sections 108 and 112 of the city charter. The ballot title of this measure states the purpose of the act to be to strike out authority to issue $100,000 of electric light bonds and $75,000 of gas light bonds, and to increase the issuable water bonds from $100,000 to $300,000, fix the character and manner of issuing such bonds and the distribution of water revenues, authorize condemnation proceedings in building water plant, provide for a water board and fix its duties.

2. An initiative bill filed in the office of the city recorder January 4, 1908, to amend the city charter by adding a new section, 135, providing for the prohibition of burials within the city limits.

3. Proposition to purchase for the sum of $140,000 the water plant and property of the Willamette Valley Company according to the offer of said company filed in the office of the city recorder March 21st, 1908.

The following qualified electors were appointed to act as judges of said election, and polling places selected as follows, to

FIRST WARD—S. R. Williams, E. R. Mummey and P. J. McPherson, Mummey and McPherson designated as clerks. Polling place, truck house, No. 271 East Eleventh Street.

SECOND WARD—D. R. Lakin, Robert Cherry and W. S. Moon; Cherry and Moon designated as clerks. Polling place, Hook and Ladder room in the city hall building, No. 29 East Eighth street.

THIRD WARD—Sherman Heller, R. S. Bryson and William G. Martin; Bryson and Martin designated as clerks. Polling place, Heller's shop, 41 West Seventh street.

FOURTH WARD—D. E. Yoran, G. F. Hurd and S. P. Ness; Hurd and Ness designated as clerks. Polling place, Wilkins building, 65 West Eighth street.

Polls to be opened at 8 o'clock a. m. and closed at 7 p. m. on said 18th day of April, 1908.

B. F. DORRIS, Recorder.

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE
On Execution and Order of Sale.

Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an Exectuon and Order of Sale issued out of the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane on the 23rd day of March, 1908, in a suit wherein L. Simons was plaintiff and Burton S. Kelsay, Eliza C. Kelsay, The First National Bank, of Eugene, Oregon, a corporation, E. T. Bushnell and George O. H. DeBar were defendants, and said Execution and Order of Sale and decree being as follows to-wit:

Whereas, on the 5th day of March, 1908, in the above-named Court a Decree was rendered in favor of the above-named plaintiff and against the above-named defendants.

And Whereas, it was further ordered and decreed by the Court that all and singular the mortgaged premises mentioned in the said complaint and hereinafter described, or so much thereof as may be sufficient to raise the amount due the plaintiff for the principal, interest, taxes, assessment, attorney fees, and the costs of this suit and the expenses of the sale, and which may be sold separately and without injury to the parties interested be sold at public auction by the Sheriff of Lane County, Oregon, in the manner prescribed by law, and according to the course and practice of this Court, and that the said Sheriff, after the time allowed by law for redemption has expired, execute a deed to the purchaser or purchasers of the said premises, on the said sale.

That the said Sheriff, out of the proceeds of the said sale, retain his fees, disbursements, and costs of said sale, and pay to the plaintiff, or to his attorney, L. H. Travis, Esq., out of the said proceeds, the sum, first of $270.00 reasonable attorney fees, and the sum of $15.40 costs of suit, and pay to the plaintiff the sum of $2,700.00 in Gold Coin of the United States of America, at 8 per cent per annum from November 23rd, 1903, in like Gold Coin, and for the sum of $41.16 taxes, with interest at 6 per cent per annum from March 24th, 1907, and for the sum of $190.84, taxes and assessment, with interest at 6 per cent per annum from February 18th, 1908, making a total of the sum of $3251.29 all in Gold Coin of the United States of America, or so much thereof as the proceeds of the said sale will pay of the same.

That in the event the said sale shall bring more than the said sum of $3251.29, the said sum aforesaid, then the surplus over the said sum of $3251.29 shall be applied, so long as it will last, as follows:

I. First National Bank, Eugene, Oregon, a corporation, the sum of $300.00, less whatever sum they be enabled to obtain from other security they have for the said sum.

II. L. Simons, assignee of judgment of L. M. Travis, for the sum of $86.37 with interest at 6 per cent per annum from April 2nd, 1907.

III. Geo. O'B. DeBar, assignee of E. T. Bushnell, for the sum of $198.50, with interest at 6 per cent per annum from March 2nd, 1908, and $12.80 costs.

IV. Geo. O'B. DeBar, for the sum of $124.53, at 4 per cent interest from December 17th, 1907.

That the defendants, Burton S. Kelsay, Eliza C. Kelsay, The First National Bank, a corporation, E. T. Bushnell and Geo. O'B DeBar, and all persons claiming under them, and all persons having liens subsequent to the execution of the said deed construed as a mortgage, by judgment or decree upon the land described in said deed construed as a mortgage, and all their representatives, and all persons having any lien or claim by or under such subsequent judgment or decree and their heirs and representatives, and all persons claiming to have acquired any estate or interest in said premises subsequent to the filing of the said notice of the pendancy of this action with the aforesaid Clerk, be forever barred and foreclosed of and from all equity of redemption and claim of, in or to said premises, from and after the delivery of the Sheriff's deed to the said premises.

And it is further adjudged and decreed that the purchaser of the said premises be let into the possession thereof, and that any of the parties to this suit who may be in possession thereof, or any part thereof, or any person who since the commencement of this suit has come into the possession thereof, shall deliver possession thereof, to the purchaser.

And it is further adjudged and decreed that if the monies arising from the said sale shall be insufficient to pay the amount so found to be due the plaintiffs set out aforesaid, with interest, taxes, attorney fees, assessments, costs and disbursements, and expense of sale and of the publication, then the Sheriff shall specify the balance due to the plaintiff in his return of such sale, and that on the coming in and filing of the said return, the Clerk of the Court shall docket the same in the Judgment Docket of said Court, as a judgment in favor of the plaintiff and against the defendants Burton S. Kelsay and Eliza C. Kelsay, and that said defendants shall pay to plaintiff said amount, and that plaintiff may have an execution therefor.

The lands and premises directed to be sold by this decree are situate, lying and being in the City of Eugene, Lane County, Oregon, and are bounded and particularly described as follows, to-wit:

Lots Number Two (2) and Three (3), in Block Number Two (2) in Kelsay's First Addition to Eugene, Lane County, Oregon.

Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditements, and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

Now, therefore, by virtue of said Execution and Decree as above recited, I will in pursuance of said decree and order of sale offer for sale for cash to the highest bidder, subject to redemption all of the right, title and interest of the above named defendants or either of them in the above described premises set forth in the decree of the Court, at the south west door of the County Court House in Eugene, Lane County, Oregon, on Monday, the 11th day of May, 1908, between the hours of 9 o'clock a. m. and 4 o'clock p. m., to-wit: at 1 o'clock p. m. on said day in order to satisfy the decree and judgment with interest, costs and accruing costs.

Dated this 2d day of April, 1908.

FRED FISK,
Sheriff of Lane County, Oregon.

Summons

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane.

Bertha E. Williams, plaintiff, vs. Howard S. Williams, defendant.

To Howard S. Williams, the above-named defendant:

In the name of the state of Oregon you are hereby summoned and required to appear and answer the complaint of the above-named plaintiff in the above entitled court, now on file with the clerk of said court, on or before the 23d day of May, 1908, and you are hereby notified that if you fail to appear and answer said complaint as hereby required the plaintiff will ask said court for the relief prayed for in her complaint so filed with the clerk of said court, to-wit:

For the dissolution of the marriage contract now existing between said plaintiff and defendant, and for an order giving and granting to plaintiff the care ad custody of the minor daughter of plaintiff and defendant, Belva Lee Williams, and for full relief in said suit.

This summons is served upon you by publication thereof by the order of Hon. L. T. Harris, judge of the above entitled court, duly made at chambers in said county on the 5th day of April, 1908, requiring the first publication hereof to be made April 10, 1908, and the last publication on the 23d day of May, 1908, and that you appear on or before the 23d day of May, 1908.

L. BILYEU,
Attorney for Plaintiff.