

The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEM

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was Sir Geoffrey's first dinner party, and Ethel felt just a little nervous as she received the guests. Captain Pelling was watching her in the pauses of his chat with Bertha Collins. He caught her eye presently and smiled at her reassuringly, for she had confided to him her dread of the awful occasion.

"You are an old friend of theirs, are you not?" Bertha was saying to the captain. "We all think Miss Mailing quite charming. I took her to her from the first; but, do you know, she is not easy to get on with. Of course she is all one could wish as a hostess; but it is impossible to gush with her. She has a way of sifting all one says and showing up anything that is absurd without certainly in the least intending to give offense. You would hardly believe it, I dare say, but I have adopted the habit of trying to talk seriously when she is listening."

"I think that is the greatest compliment you could pay her. Will you adopt the same practice with me?"

"I should not dare," she replied, with mock gravity. "If I were to get a reputation for seriousness I should probably die an old maid. Men always prefer frivolous talkers for their wives. There is the dinner bell. Are you to take me down?"

Later in the evening Miss Collins dropped into a quiet corner and discussed the things with the utmost freedom with an intimate friend whom she had not seen since the end of the season. She was describing the breaking up of the party when Pauline's intended marriage had been discovered.

"Now tell me—could there be anything more ridiculous than her running away from her own house and marrying, or trying to marry, a man secretly, when there was no one to prevent her doing it openly? My dear, you should have seen our faces when Mrs. Sefton read us the note she had left behind, as we dropped in, one after another, to lunch—oh! At first everybody looked very surprised, and then the absurdity of the whole proceeding struck us. Why could she not have been married properly? No one could have objected to her marrying that good-looking artist if she chose to do so."

"Was she very much 'gone' on him?"

"A wfully! It must have been a terrible blow to her when her husband turned up."

"Rather! Isn't it odd, his being here?"

"I don't think so. He was very good to Sir Geoffrey when he was in less affluent circumstances, I believe."

"Things seem a bit mixed. From what I could make out, he had believed himself a widower, just as she had thought herself a widow, until they met in the church. Don't you think it probable that, while he was under the impression that his wife was dead, he may have had a liking for Miss Mailing?"

"I believe you are right," Bertha replied, energetically. "For I saw him looking at her before dinner with his heart in his eyes."

"It is certainly very strange that he should have fallen in love with the girl who was being kept out of her right position by his own wife! It looks like the finger of Fate, doesn't it—though which way the finger is pointing I can't see."

As the guests, one after another, took their departure, Ethel felt her burden lighten. Her first party had been an unqualified success, but she was none the less glad to have it over. Lord Summers stayed behind, talking earnestly with Sir Geoffrey.

"I admit I was disappointed when I heard that she had taken the family jewels with her," he said, in allusion to Pauline. "I'm afraid she has inherited some of her father's want of principle. The Luftons were never particularly distinguished for honesty. What do you mean to do about it, Geoffrey?"

"Nothing openly. I am in communication with her waiting maid, who had promised to let me know if there is any idea on Pauline's part of selling them, and I shall, unknown to her, become the purchaser."

"An excellent idea and a very generous one. By the bye, as things have turned out, how fortunate it is that the engagement between our charming Ethel and young Dorton was broken off."

"He stopped suddenly as Ethel and Pelling came back from bidding farewell to Miss Collins. They both caught the drift of his words, and Ethel glanced at Pelling's face; but it was calmly unconscious. Thinking this a good opening to talk of Jack, he said:

"If you are not too tired, I want to show you a delightful style of title page that I came across this morning. I thought you might elaborate the idea for your 'Central Africa.' It is on this table somewhere."

"I am afraid my share of 'Central Africa' will not be anything to be proud of," he replied with a smile.

"That is nonsense, and you know it, Captain Pelling! I have made up my mind that your sketches are to be the principal attraction of the book. It is really unkind of you to make light of your work after all our interest in it!"

"That is just it," he returned, laughingly. "I have become so accustomed to working in company that I find I can't move a step by myself."

"You would not be offended at anything I should say for your good?"

"Go on," he said, and waited with knitted brows for what she had to say. Ethel, in her short life, had often had unpleasant tasks to perform, but never one so unpleasant as this.

"Out of your own mouth shall you be judged," she began, smiling at him to hide the trembling of her lips. "You say you have become so used to working in company that you cannot move a step by yourself; but I say you must take the one useful step by yourself that will secure you good company to work in for the rest of your life. Go to Paris at once, seek out your wife, and give her the protection of your presence. She will

yield. You must not judge her by her words when you last met. You had her at a cruel disadvantage. Think what an awful shock your sudden appearance must have been to her! It is very, very hard for me to say this to you, after all your kindness to us in the past; but you will not misjudge my motive. I am speaking for your good. By and by, when you are quite happy with each other, you will be thankful to me for sending you away in this abrupt manner."

"You wish me to go at once?" he asked.

"That is a very cruel way to put it," she answered, gently. "You know I do not wish you to go at all. True friends are not so plentiful that one can afford to play battledore and shuttlecock with them for one's own pleasure. For your own good, Captain Pelling, I advise your going at once."

"You are one of the best women that ever lived," he exclaimed, "and I am proud to have had you for a friend! I ought to have known my presence would give you pain, and refused Sir Geoffrey's invitation. Don't speak until I've finished," he went on, hurriedly, holding up his hand to check any interruption. "I shall follow your advice to the letter. I will thrust aside my own inclinations, and run over to Paris and see what Mrs. Pelling is doing, spend Christmas among the Frenchmen, and perhaps in the New Year Captain and Mrs. Pelling may have the honor of receiving Sir Geoffrey and Miss Mailing at the Wigwam."

For once Ethel looked at him with her eyes brimming with tears; but she did not dare make an attempt to speak. He took her hand in his, and held it close as he finished.

"You must make some plausible excuse to Sir Geoffrey for my abrupt departure in the morning; or, better still, I will write from town. I shall write to you from Paris, if I may. And now, before I say good-night, I must give you this letter. I received it two days ago from Dorton. I know it will please you. He and I correspond regularly; so I shall keep you posted up in his movements. Good-by, my true, honest little friend."

She sat, as he left her, holding Jack's letter in her hand, hearing his voice very faintly in the distance as he excused himself with the plea of fatigue to her father, and wondering how it had happened that this interview, which she had brought about for the sole purpose of hearing news of Jack, had ended in so sudden a determination on the captain's part to seek his wife. She knew his resolve was the result of her advice, and she hoped devoutly that good might come of it.

And Pelling mounted the wide stairs very slowly, deep in thought as he went.

"She is quite right, as she is always. It is the only thing to do; and I never saw it myself. My place is undoubtedly by my wife's side."

CHAPTER XXV.

"I tell you your presence here is an unwarrantable intrusion! If you do not leave my apartment of your own free will, I shall be compelled to have you ejected!"

It was the third day since Pelling left Ethel, and this was his wife's greeting! He had had a long battle with himself; but duty had been triumphant, and his mind once made up he was not to be discouraged by a few bitter words.

"That is not necessary. Of course I will leave you; but you will not refuse to answer me one or two questions first?"

"Ask your questions then, and, if I choose to answer them, I will. If I don't choose, I will not. But, for heaven's sake, get over them quickly!"

"Will you tell me something of our child, Pauline?" he asked.

She sprung up with a look of desperate fright on her face.

"How dare you come here to browbeat me like this?" she exclaimed, vehemently; and then she sank back on the couch again. But, after a pause, she said quietly enough: "You have touched my one weak point. Of course you have to hear what there is to tell. My baby was born a weakly little thing. I had hard work to keep body and soul together in those first days after my father's death. I knew from the first she could not live long. She died when she was three months old."

"I wish she had lived."

"Why do you wish such a mad thing as that?"

"Because, if it had not been for seeing her grave, I should have gone on searching for you until I found you."

"Ah! And if you had found me then, if you had come to Mallingford quietly and said, 'Pauline, you are my wife; come with me; do you know what I would have done? I would have killed you! I would kill you even now, if your death would undo any of the harm you have worked me! But it is all over, and the next thing you will hear is that I have killed myself!'"

"Why do you hate me so bitterly, Pauline?" he asked; and he studied her attentively while she answered:

"Because you have been, by evil genius ever since I became your wife. If I had not married you, my life might have been as happy and pleasant as other women's lives are. No sooner did I know that I was my uncle's heiress than my happiness was destroyed by hearing that I was to inherit only on the condition that I did not marry without my guardian's consent. Thanks to you, this condition was already broken; and my six years of possession have been embittered by the certainty in my own mind that you were alive somewhere and would surely find me some day, and deprive me of all that I had risked so much to obtain."

Pelling sighed heavily and took up his hat.

"You will let me come and see you again?"

"Why? You do not care for me in the least. Why should you take so much trouble to be civil to me?"

"You are my wife. No amount of dislike or shortcomings on your part alters that fact. We have been very unfortunate in the past. I can see you are unhappy; and, in an indirect way, I am the cause of your unhappiness. I would give a great deal to make things brighter for you, if you would let me."

She was touched by the earnestness of his manner and tone.

"You are very good," she said; "and I am sorry I behaved so badly to you."

She stood silent for a few moments, Pelling watching her quietly; while they stood the clock on the mantelpiece struck 12.

"You must go now," she told him hurriedly. "I have an appointment to ride with some friends. Come again at this time to-morrow."

He did not attempt any outward display of affection, but passed down the stairs. He met Babetta half way down.

"With whom does your mistress ride to-day?" he asked.

"With the Baroness de Belette," a woman well known for the pertinacity with which she had clung to the extreme edge of respectable society for the last five years. "They have a wager as to who will ride the greatest distance on a horse belonging to Monsieur Grevin which has always refused to carry a lady."

Pelling went on with a little unacknowledged anxiety in his heart. He would go back and try to dissuade Pauline from this mad freak, but that he knew it would be useless; and any show of authority on his part just now might perhaps undo the little good he believed he had accomplished.

He drove straight back to the hotel, and sat with his chin resting on his hands at the little table in the window of his room. He was in a strange state of mingled hope and dread. He did not know what he wished; he only knew that he meant to do what he conceived to be his duty; the rest he must leave in higher hands.

While thus musing over the past, he was brought back to the present by the sight of his wife cantering by in company with several others; and, following them, he noticed a fidgety chestnut horse, with a side-saddle on, which was being led by a groom. Pauline looked up and bowed gravely; he returned the greeting.

How handsome she looked! How well she sat her horse! How proud he might have been of her if she had never allowed the love of riches to crowd the womanliness out of her heart! He leaned forward and watched her as far as he could see from the window.

An hour later Pelling was stooping over his wife's poor crushed body in one of the little chalets in the Bois de Boulogne. She had been thrown and trampled on, and was dying of internal hemorrhage. Her voice was very low, and her words came slowly, with many pauses.

"It is heaven's justice! After you had gone this morning I made up my mind to do as you wished. I thought I would try to love you—you were so good—and we should be—happy—together. I had no right to be happy—after my wickedness, and heaven has—settled it."

"My poor mistaken girl!"

"Yes, that is true. I've been mistaken all my life. No one ever tried to make me good. I was always left to servants—when I was a child. Heaven is just, and the great Judge will remember my—great temptations. Will you kiss me—just once, Alec? Say you forgive me—it will make my mind easier."

In spite of his efforts not to disturb her last moments by any show of feeling, a large tear dropped upon her face. She looked at him wonderingly, and put up her finger to his cheek.

"For me," she said very softly—"you cry for me. I do not deserve—to have one mourner—to my death bed. I have done evil to every one—but Jack. Give him my love. No! I will not leave messages; they might bring a curse."

Another spasm seized her; and, when it had passed, the hue of death was creeping over her face. It was all finished now, and the strong young life that had been so misused had come to an end.

Pelling took out a card and left it with the people of the house, and then went straightway to see that all the necessary arrangements were made for the interment of her who had once been very dear to him. He wrote a short letter to Sir Geoffrey that night. It ran:

"Dear Sir Geoffrey—Your niece, my wife, was killed by a fall from her horse to-day. We were reconciled at the last. Tell your daughter I can never express my gratitude to her for sending me here; it will always be a source of thankfulness in my heart. The family jewels are intact, Babetta tells me, and they will be sent by special courier. When the funeral is over, I think I shall join Dorton in Italy, and toward the spring we may work our way homeward in company. Ask Miss Ethel to keep us ever green in her memory. I've set my heart on seeing our young friend Jack a Royal Academician before many years. With his talent, he wants only a little judicious pushing, and I mean to devote my time to pushing him."

"Always your sincere friend,"

"ALEXANDER PELLING."

Ethel was greatly affected by this letter, and she went about with a very sober face for some weeks, until the preparations for Christmas absorbed her, and left her no time for thinking of handsome young artists or anything else. But, even in the midst of the excitement of Christmastide, there was always a craving in her heart, a dreary sense of emptiness, which grew and grew until she was compelled, with many blushes, to admit its presence, and to acknowledge to herself that only one person in all the world could fill the void.

(To be continued.)

Proverb Comes Out.

Miles—You remember Sapeigh, who went west a couple of years ago and married an heiress, didn't you?

Giles—Yes. What of him?

Miles—I understand his wife got a divorce from him recently.

Giles—I'm not surprised to hear it.

Miles—Why?

Giles—Because a fool and his money are soon parted, you know.

Trouble Afoot.

The Two-Step—They are all after my scalp.

The Waits—Well, you're the fellow who crowded me out—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Little Lessons in Patriotism

The Count de Rochambeau had been a gallant soldier of France long before he was assigned by the French government to aid the cause of the American revolutionists. He had fought at the siege of Maestricht; he had led his regiment to the assault of Fort St. Philippe, at Minorca; he had led in the capture of Fort Mahon. Always a soldier, he was heart and soul in sympathy with the struggle of the Americans against the heavy odds of the British army.

On his way to America after his embarkation at Brest he was attacked by a British fleet off Bermuda, but drove back the attackers. Immediately after landing in Rhode Island, Rochambeau set about the construction of fortifications that prevented Sir Henry Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot from making an attack that they had planned.

He sent his own son back to France to negotiate for the transmission of more troops and supplies. He had the same interest in the cause of the revolutionists that the American generals had.

The work of De Rochambeau in the war did much to hasten the lagging end. The concerted plan of campaign that terminated in Yorktown was largely aided by the efficacy of the Frenchman. The assaults made by De Rochambeau and St. Simon against his stronghold convinced Cornwallis of the futility of his defense and led to his surrender.

THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER.

Striking Personality of John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi.

One of the most interesting men of the country to-day and a most brilliant figure in the political arena is John Sharp Williams, who represents the Eighth District of Mississippi in the House of Congress.

Representative Williams, in his capacity as the leader of the Democrats on the floor of Congress, has achieved a national reputation. That he won a signal victory by bringing order out of chaos among the Democratic representatives goes without saying.

The Democratic leader was born July 30, 1854, at Memphis, Tenn., his mother having died, and his father, who was colonel of the Twenty-seventh Tennessee Volunteers, Confederate States Army, being killed at Shiloh, and Memphis, being threatened with capture by the Federal army, his family removed to his mother's family homestead in Yazoo County, Miss. There the future leader received his education at private schools, the Kentucky Military Institute, near Frankfort, Ky., the University of the South, at Sawnee, Tenn., the University of Virginia, and the University of Heidelberg, in Baden, Germany. Subsequently Congressman Williams studied law under Profs. Minor and Southall at the University of Virginia, and in the office of Harris, McKisick & Tarley in Memphis. In 1877 he received a license to practice in the courts of law and chancery of Shelby County, Tenn. In December, 1878, he removed to Yazoo City, Miss., where he engaged in the practice of his profession and the varied pursuits of a cotton planter. He was named as a delegate to the Chicago convention which named Cleveland and Stevenson. He was elected to the Fifty-third Congress and has been re-elected to every Congress since, sometimes without opposition.

Williams' methods as a leader are interesting to study. He is persuasive, not domineering. He has a winning manner and he seems to be seeking help and light from one at the very time he is bringing a person around to his views. Congressmen who go into his little room in the library wing determined to let Williams know that they will put up with no nonsense go out pleased and flattered and inclined to help him out. On the rare occasions when it is necessary for him to show his authority the iron band comes out of the velvet glove and the insurgent knows what has happened without having anyone tell him.

Williams is not an impressive man to look at; in fact, he is homely in face and careless in dress. A tangled mass of matted hair falls down to a point not far from his eyes. A straggling mustache covers a mouth of generous size and irregular outline. His manners are as easy and unpretentious as an old shoe.

He would not be a rich man in New York, but he is in Mississippi. He is a lawyer and a planter, whose father left him a fortune. He does not look, however, as if he had a dollar, and all the advice of his friends cannot make him spruce up.

Williams has a remarkable voice. It is somewhat nasal and rather incisive, but his command of it is as perfect as that of a musician over a musical instrument.

He plays on it like a violin; it sweeps from high to low, from loud to soft, in perfect tune with the modulations of his theme. He need hardly speak above a whisper to attract the close and strained attention of the whole House in a moment.

His command of sarcasm is, it is generally agreed, unequalled in the House. It is not of the bitter sort, but Williams' exposes of the weak points of the enemy's armor in such a way that the enemy laughs, though ruefully, while he writhes.

Though a Southerner, Williams is exempt from the prejudices of his section. One of his striking speeches was that in which he defended Gen. Sherman from the charge of violating the laws of war in the march to the sea. It was a remarkable address and was listened to with breathless attention by the crowded House. One of his sentences was this:

"As an American citizen, as the son of a rebel soldier, as a man who is intensely American, although he is intensely Southern, I want the world to know that when civilized men were fighting civilized men, upon the American continent—one of them in behalf of the cause of the preservation of the Union, as he understood it, and the other in behalf of the cause of local independence, as he understood it—the watchword was chivalry and fair fight."

THE ARMY OF TEACHERS.

120,000 Men and 330,000 Women Engaged in Schools of America.

The army of education in the United States is made up of 450,000 teachers, of whom 120,000 are men and 330,000 women. The overwhelming majority of the teachers are natives of the United States, less than 30,000 having been born abroad—one in fifteen.

Most of the male teachers are between the years of twenty-five and thirty-five. The majority of the women teachers are between fifteen and twenty-five.

There are 2,300 male teachers over sixty-five. There are less than 1,500 female teachers over sixty-five. Three times as many female as male teachers are put down as "age unknown."

There are 21,000 colored teachers in the United States, thus divided between the two sexes: 7,700 men and 13,300 women. There are 500 Indian teachers in the Indian schools of the United States—240 men and 260 women.

The average age of teachers in the United States is higher than in England and lower than in Germany. The proportion of very youthful teachers is much greater in the country than in the city districts.

The largest proportion of male teachers is to be found in West Virginia, where they number 50 per cent of the total. The largest proportion of women is to be found in Vermont, where they form 90 per cent of the whole number. The standard of education is very much higher in Vermont than it is in West Virginia.

The number of teachers in the United States has increased greatly in recent years. In 1871 there were 125,000; in 1880, 225,000; in 1890, 340,000, and it is at present 450,000.

Mrs. Roosevelt's Thoughtfulness.

When President Roosevelt is at his summer home at Oyster Bay, two secret service men sit all night under a big tree near the house. It is only on very stormy nights that they desert the tree and take refuge on the veranda, and are thus protected from the rain, but not from the north wind that sometimes sweeps in from Long Island sound. During a storm last summer the wind, moaning through the trees, drove the rain in sheets upon the veranda, and the most sheltered place the secret service men could find was wet and chill.

Within the house all was silent. Apparently everybody had gone to bed. But suddenly the side door creaked, and a feminine voice called out: "Come here, won't you, please?" The secret service men lost no time in responding, for they recognized the voice.

"I've been worrying about you men out in this awful night," said Mrs. Roosevelt, "and thought that some hot coffee would do you good. Come in and drink it. It was too late to call the cook, so I made it myself. I hope that it is all right."

"It seemed to me to be the finest coffee I had ever tasted," remarked the secret service man, when he told this little story of the ever-present thoughtfulness of Mrs. Roosevelt for those around her.—Success Magazine.

"Honest Abe."

It is a significant fact that in a community where crime was virtually unknown, where plain, straightforward dealing was assumed as a matter of course, and credit was fearlessly asked and given, Lincoln won an enviable reputation for integrity and honor. In a moral atmosphere of this sort ordinary veracity and fairness attracted no particular attention. Honesty was not merely the best policy; it was the rule of life, and people were expected to be upright and just with one another. But when a clerk in a country store walked miles to deliver a few ounces of tea innocently withheld from a customer by an error in the scales, and when he made a long, hard trip in order to return a few cents accidentally overpaid him, he was talked about, and the fact is that "Honest Abe" was a tribute, not a nickname.—Century.

The average man so hates to eat away from home that when he is invited out, arrangements should be made for sending a fire alarm from his house at the time dinner is over, to call him home.



Neuralgia in the Face.—For pain in the face and teeth take two teaspoonfuls of flour, the same quantity of grated ginger and mix them well together with sufficient alcohol to make a thin paste. Spread this on a linen cloth and apply it on the part affected on going to bed, wrapping a piece of flannel over all and it will afford relief.

The Virtues of the Onion.—As a matter of fact onions are really sweeteners of the breath after the local effects have passed away. Onions correct stomach disorders and carry off the accumulated poisons of the system. They provide a blood purifier that all may freely use. Eaten raw, an onion will often check a cold in the head. One small onion eaten every night before retiring is a well known prescription for numerous affections of the head and is highly recommended for sleeplessness.

Influenza and Grippe.—When influenza was epidemic throughout Europe many factory workmen contracted the disease and died. At one factory, however, the disease did not appear. Investigation showed that oil of turpentine was used in metal working. The oil became warm and evaporated, and inhaling the air laden with it seemed to act as a germicide. Since then oil of turpentine has been always evaporated in that factory upon a stove and not a case of influenza has ever occurred. This preventive measure may be successfully employed in dwellings.

Home-Made Cough Cure.—Procure one cake of dried mullein leaves from the drug store. It is about two inches square and three-fourths of an inch thick. Break it up and put on to steep in a quart of water. Simmer an hour or more, strain carefully and add three tablespoonfuls of pine tar. Steep for an hour and strain again, keeping always a quart of the solution in the vessel. Add three cups of good sugar. Simmer again, adding water as needed. There should be a quart when done and it is a thin syrup. Begin with a tablespoonful dose three times a day and increase somewhat if needed.

A Great Schoolmaster.

"He managed to make the boys feel that it was a terrible thing to lose his respect," writes a former pupil of Dr. George Moberly, for many years head master of the Winchester School, England. His personality was inspiring and impressive. In "Six Great Schoolmasters" the author says that Dr. Moberly would occasionally use his powers of ridicule and sarcasm to an extent that seems scarcely fair.

He had been much annoyed by letters from the mother of one of the boys, begging him to see personally to all sorts of small matters connected with her son's health. Dr. Moberly determined to put a stop to this, so one day in public, before a whole class, he said to the boy:

"B, I have heard from your mother, saying that you are to wear flannel next your skin and to masticate your food. See that you do it."

It is possible to imagine the agonized letter which went home by the next post, begging that no more such letters should reach the doctor.

A boy once brought to Dr. Moberly a letter from his mother, asking for leave out. The boy had been smoking, and the letter smelled strongly of the forbidden weed.

"Johnson," said Dr. Moberly, "does your mother smoke? Don't let me catch you doing it!"

His Natural Bent.

Fond Father.—If that boy of mine has any particular bent, I can't find it.

Philosopher.—What experiments have you made to find out?

"Very thorough ones. I gave him a toy printing press, a steam engine, a box of paints, a chest of tools and a lot of other things carefully selected to find out whether his tastes were literary, mechanical, artistic, commercial or what, and I know no more than I did before."

"What did he do with them?"

"Smashed them all up."

"Ah, I see! He is to be a furniture mover."—New York Weekly.

Sailors' Earrings.

"Sailors don't wear earrings as they used to," said a ship chandler. "In the past I had a jewelry case and sold earrings of all kinds. Lately I did away with it, for there is now no money in sailors' earrings at all."

"But there used to be. Every sail had his ears pierced, and was as proud of his earrings as a lady. For some varieties I got as high as \$50 a pair."

"A sailor would never wear precious stones, like diamonds or pearls, in his ears. The only stone he would wear was agate. That was a funny fact, wasn't it?"

Decidedly Angelic.

Winks—Cracky! What a pretty typewriter you have!

Jinks—Pretty! She's angelic. Why, man, when that girls taps off an ordinary business letter on that dusty old machine in my office you'd think you were listening to a symphony from Beethoven.—New York Weekly.