



The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

Forget her! As Jack turned into the house, after watching the carriage down the drive, his head and heart were on fire with the memory of her last lingering look, and the blood danced in his fingers as he recalled the warm, clinging pressure of her hand at parting.

"I think I must be mad when she is near me, for somehow I always manage to believe in the possibility of her love for me when in her presence," he muttered, remorsefully. "And, if she did love, what then? Could I throw Ethel over? My sweet, pure little Ethel, it would break her heart! I must get rid of this folly. I'll finish Ethel's letter at once, and send it off by the morning post. I'll write a long, loving letter to the poor little girl; it will do me as much good to write it as it will her to receive it."

This time he commenced with "My dear Ethel," and then, before proceeding further, he made a close examination of the beautifully executed address and crest on the paper.

The crest of "Mallyngs"—as the name was originally spelled—a tiger's head and front paws in repose, with the motto, "Let the sleeping lie," particularly interested him. He had stood for many a minute during the past week in front of one of these emblems of the family circle—fierce, ungovernable—and pondered the probable events that had caused it to be bestowed on them as their badge.

"I wonder why she never married?" he mused. "I wonder if mine is the true reason, and there really is some poor beggar in the background awaiting her twenty-fifth birthday? I shall have a chance of finding out if I accept her invitation for the partridge shooting in September, for Lord Summers told me she would be twenty-five in that month. Ought I, in justice to Ethel, to place myself in the way of such temptation? Bosh! I must be a weak fool indeed if I cannot live in the society of a beautiful woman without making an idiot of myself! Besides if I come and see for myself that she is really 'gone' on some lucky fellow, it will be the most complete cure I could find for my own folly."

But Jack knew this to be false reasoning; nevertheless he would not listen to conscience, and, with a gloomy brow and tightly compressed lips, sat glaring moodily at the blank sheet of paper before him.

"Will you take your luncheon in here, sir? It will seem less lonely than in the dining room, I think."

Jack looked up in surprise at the housekeeper.

"I must have been sitting here nearly three hours. I don't mind where I lunch, Mrs. Perkins."

"Then I'll put it in here, sir; it's brighter and more cheerful than the dining room."

Mrs. Perkins walked to a sideboard and flicked away an imaginary speck of dust.

"Were you here in Sir Paul's time?" he asked, more because the old lady wanted to talk than from any interest he took in the matter.

"Bless you, sir, I've been a servant in this house for turned fifty years! I began as under housemaid at sixteen, and here I've been ever since; so I'm what you may call an old servant."

"Of course you remember Miss Malling's mother? She must have been a beautiful woman."

"Sometimes she was and sometimes she wasn't. She was handsome enough naturally; but she had such an awful temper that it quite disfigured her at times. I've known her to sulk about the house for a month at a time because her brother, the late Sir Paul, had refused her some trifling thing. We were quite relieved when she got married, and went away on the Continent with her husband. You see she was many years younger than her brothers, Sir Paul and the present baronet, Sir Geoffrey, and was a bit spoiled in consequence—though there is an old saying in the family that a Malling's daughter is always a fiend, asking your pardon for the word, sir; so it's lucky Miss Pauline is only a Malling by adoption."

"Then you think she has escaped the falling usual to the ladies of the family?"

"I should not like to give an opinion of my mistress' disposition. It would be very bad taste on my part, sir. Miss Malling, during the six years she has been mistress here, has been everything one could desire."

"I beg your pardon," he said, politely. "I did not wish to betray you into disrespect for Miss Malling. My question was the natural outcome of your remark as to Miss Malling's being only a Malling by adoption."

"To be sure, sir; and that takes me back to what I was saying. Miss Pauline's mother was away on the Continent with her husband directly after they were married, and roamed about for years from one country to another with him; she never came home again, poor dear! She died when Miss Pauline was fifteen years old; and then Sir Paul was anxious to have the child with him in England, as he had made her his heiress, in consequence of the other brother, Geoffrey, having married without his consent. But Major Lufton would not part with his daughter, and refused even to let her come on a visit; so we none of us ever saw Miss Pauline until she came here, a grown woman, to take her

place as mistress of Mallingford."

"I suppose you knew her at once by her likeness to her mother?"

"Strange to say, we didn't, sir! To be sure she was very ill, for her father had been dead six months before she heard a word about being heiress to this property, and all that time, to keep herself from starving, had been teaching in some Spanish convent. But even as she recovered her looks we watched in vain for something in the voice or the expression of the face that should remind us of her mother. There are the same beautiful hair and eyes, and there the likeness ends."

"Do you say she never knew about her heiress-ship until after her father's death?"

"Yes, sir. She says he would not tell her because he was afraid she might be tempted to leave him. I believe they were in dreadful straits sometimes."

"It must have been a wonderful change for her when she came here."

"It was indeed, sir—so great that she can never to this day bear to recall that dreadful time, and refuses to talk about it to any one."

CHAPTER IV.

Ethel Mallet knelt on a chair, her bonny face pressing closely against the window pane. The room being on the second floor, it was only by so doing that she could see the steps that led up to the front door. It was a quarter past eight, and she was watching anxiously, as she had done for several mornings past, for the coming of the postman. She left her position presently, and bustled about, putting little finishing touches to the breakfast table.

"It is hard on poor dear dad to have to put up with petty inconveniences," she said, affectionately, as she laid the morning newspaper next the roses, and looked to see if she could do anything further to beautify the unlovely lodging house breakfast table. "I know the sight of a stain on the tablecloth takes away his appetite. With the very next few shillings I make by my copying I'll buy a couple of tablecloths, and then we can have an extra one without asking Mrs. Philpott for it and risking black looks for the rest of the week. Oh, here you are, papa! I thought you were going to be late—and it is your Kensington day, too. Ah, there's the postman! I wonder if he has a letter for me? Isn't it strange that Jack has written only once in a whole week?"

"Young fellows always find plenty of occupation in the country; you must not worry about it, my child." This remark was rather uncalled for, as Ethel, the whole week through, had scrupulously avoided mentioning the subject of Jack's neglect. "The country round Mallingford is particularly attractive, and I can quite understand that Jack is feasting his soul on its beauties."

"Oh, papa, do you know Mallingford? You never said so before!"—and Ethel was just about to launch out into a string of questions when her thoughts were diverted by the appearance of the servant with the fish for breakfast, and a letter.

"For me, and from Jack!" she exclaimed, breathlessly; but she did not attempt to read it until she had attended to every little want of her father's, and seen him comfortably settled for his morning glance over the leaders in the newspapers.

Then she took up the letter and began reading it. As she read, the sweet anticipation of pleasure faded slowly from her face, and she laid the epistle down, looking perplexed and troubled.

She went on pretending to eat, filled her father's cup when he pushed it toward her, and resolutely kept silence until he had laid down his newspaper and caught her wistful look.

"Well, what are you waiting to say?" he asked.

"I don't know; Jack has written a nice, long letter, and yet I am disappointed. I'm never satisfied; am I, dad? He tells me here that he's very lonely, and a line or two lower down he says that Miss Malling, of whom he gave such a glowing description in his first note, has left for London. I know I'm narrow minded, but I can't help fancying that it's more her absence than mine that makes him lonely. As if I did not know Jack to be one of the most honorable men in the world! Please call me a few hard names, dad, and make me ashamed of myself."

But Mr. Mallet did nothing of the sort. "I think it extremely bad taste on Jack's part to fill his letters to you with descriptions of another woman's beauty."

"Now, there you are wrong! It's just that that satisfies me as to Jack's good faith. If there was any scrap of unfairness to me in his admiration for Miss Malling he would not write so openly about it. It was only my nonsense about being jealous, you know."

"You are a veritable little bee, sucking the honey and leaving the poison. I'll not say one word against your hero, my dear. But I don't like to hear of any slight being put upon you. You know I don't think him worthy of my little girl."

"You conceited old dad," Ethel said, with a smile, "to think your girl better than any one else's! Why, Jack is much too good for me! Even you admit he's clever."

"Granted. But who is he? He has a

straight nose and a good pair of shoulders; but what was his grandfather? Have you ever asked him?"

"Papa! What an extraordinary question that would be for me to ask him! I dare say his grandfather was as good a man as mine."

"My dear, your grandfather was one of the oldest companions in England. The Malling of Mallingford hold themselves among the best people in Exbridgeshire."

Ethel looked at her father as if she feared his reason had given way.

"I dare say you are very astonished. You have always known me as a hard-working drawing master, and of course concluded I had never been anything else. My dear, that Mallingford Park, of which Jack writes so enthusiastically, is mine by all just laws of succession. But my elder brother, the late owner, cut me off with a shilling because I annoyed him about a trifling matter, and left the whole property to my niece, your cousin, Pauline Lufton."

"And I am eighteen, and this is the first word I have ever heard of it!"

"Yes, and most likely the last, for it is a subject I don't care to talk about. I don't think I should have spoken of it now if I had not felt extremely annoyed with Jack for his ungentleman-like neglect during the past week. You are as well born as this cousin of yours of whom he raves, and I will not allow him to slight you in any way."

"Daddy, will you let me manage this matter myself? You have so surprised me by what you have just said that I am almost bewildered, and can hardly think of anything else. But I am sure that I am too self-conceited to let Jack really slight me. If I thought he wanted me to give him his freedom I would do it at once. I think it would almost break my heart, but I would do it. I would not bestow myself where I was lightly thought of."

"Heaven bless my child! I can trust you to support the family reputation for self-respect; and, Ethel, if you are writing to Jack to-day, don't touch on that subject. I have reasons for not wishing him to know anything about the matter until I tell him myself."

Ethel looked disappointed. She handed her father his hat and gloves, and kissed her hand to him from the window as he turned the corner of the street, and then went back to her letter. She read it through more than once, her face wearing a thoughtful expression. Then she sat down with loosely clasped hands, thinking over the letter even when she had returned it to her pocket.

"I am sure of it—he loves this Miss Malling! Papa did not call her by that name. I forget now what he called her; but it was not Malling. I thought my dislike to parting with Jack was all nonsensical fancy at the time; but I know now it was a real forewarning of this sorrow. He will never come back just the same as he went, even if he gets over this fancy for her. Jack—dear old Jack—why—why did you speak of your love for me until you were quite—quite certain you could never care for any one else? Oh, Jack, I can't let you go, dear!"

With a heart-broken little cry she threw herself upon the cushion.

CHAPTER V.

Babette's arms and back ached almost beyond endurance, yet the brush continued to play over Pauline Malling's hair as it hung in luxuriant profusion down her back. Pauline was deep in thought, for the Duke of Banno had just sent her the exquisite bunch of roses she held in her hand, with the little note lying open on the table, and she was making up her mind as to whether she should accept or reject the offer she knew he would make when he called by and by.

"Did I look really well last night, Babette?" she asked.

"Mademoiselle is irresistible when she chooses," murmured the French woman. Miss Malling again relapsed into deep thought.

"If I could only be sure of the past remaining the past, if I were only certain that ugly facts would not turn up unexpectedly to face me, I would marry this poor creature with a title—I would, if only to save me from myself. Surely, after six years of safety and prosperity, I am never going to be such an utter idiot as to risk loss of everything, because this poor painter is good looking and charmingly candid. I hate myself for my weakness. Only ten days ago I began this flirtation for my own amusement and to annoy that big-eyed, pale-faced child, to give her a few unhappy hours as a set-off against the perpetual anxiety her mere existence causes me, and, before I am certain that either of these purposes is accomplished, I wake up to the humiliating knowledge that I am caught in my own trap, that for the first time in my life I have fallen in love!"

She burst into scornful laughter, so startling Babette that the ivory-backed brush flew out of her hand, and she stood with round eyes and open mouth regarding her mistress' face in the glass.

"What is the matter with you? Why are you staring at me like that?"

By an effort Babette recovered her usual subdued, respectful expression.

"I feared mademoiselle was not well," she murmured, apologetically.

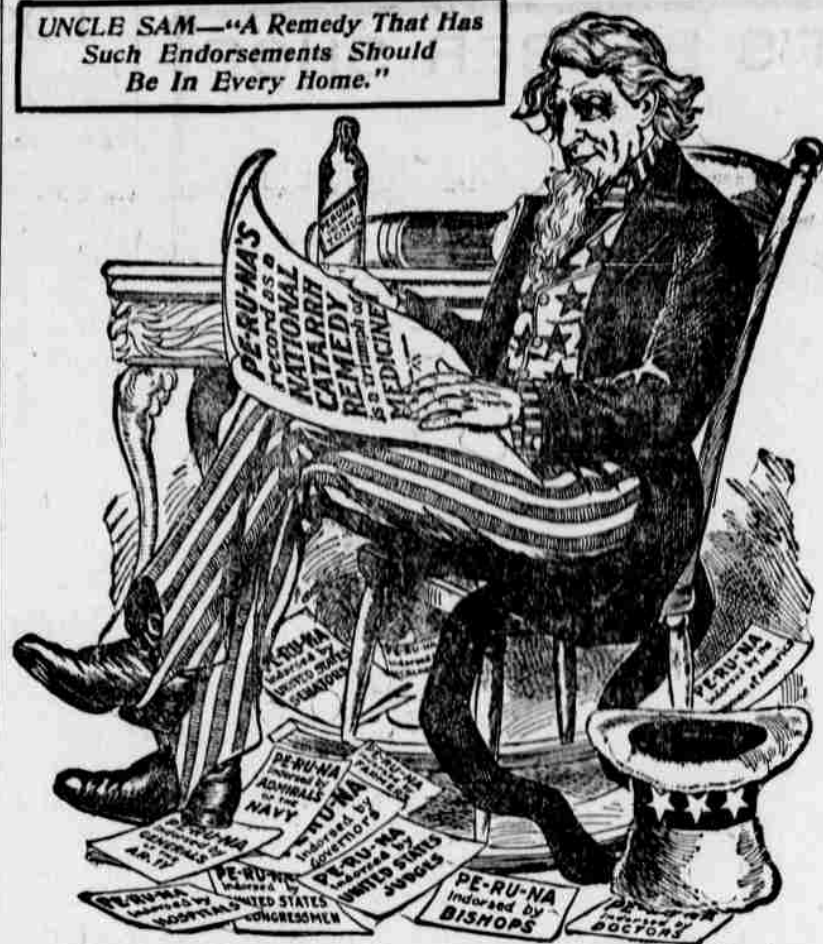
"Nonsense! Go on with your brushing, and do not take notice of what does not concern you."

"She is a very cat!" Babette said, confidentially, to the brush, as she picked it up. "I should like to know what wickedness she is planning now."

"Perhaps it is not to be wondered at, after all," Pauline mused. "He is so different from the men one usually meets—so honestly simple, so bright and true, so sensitively honorable. I believe he would marry that chit in spite of me if the release did not come from her. It shall! If I cannot have him, she never shall! On that one point my mind is fully made up!"

(To be continued.)

UNCLE SAM—"A Remedy That Has Such Endorsements Should Be In Every Home."



Election Returns That Interest All Parties!

Made of Ebony.

A Massachusetts gentleman met a colored man who had recently worked for him, and into whose family, says the Boston Herald, a girl baby had come shortly before.

"What have you named her?" asked Mr. Green, on being told by the father of the addition to his family.

"Dat's what we can't 'cide on," was the reply. "I wants her name Clara and my old woman wants it Nettie."

"Well, then," suggested Mr. Green, "why don't you call her Clarinet?"

"I declare, Marse Green," said the colored man, admiringly, "dat is purtier dan either of 'em."

Meeting his colored friend several weeks later, Mr. Green was amused to hear him say, "We's named her Clarinet."

A King's Punctuality.

All men agree in the abstract that "punctuality is the soul of business," but few act up to the maxim with the strictness of the king of the Belgians. Whoever or however he may travel, whether the visit be of business, pleasure or ceremony, he is punctual, not only to the hour, but to the minute—it might also be said to the second. And yet his majesty is never seen to consult a watch. But his familiars know that his habit of passing his hand along his flowing beard is only a device for glancing at a small watch which he wears fastened to his wrist.—London Globe.

No Improvement on Nature.

Irate Patient—Here! you told me these false teeth would be just as good as natural ones, and they hurt me horribly.

Painless Dentist—Well, didn't your natural ones hurt you?—Le Rire.

Theory of French Waiter.

"I have a theory about dyspepsia and indigestion," said the head waiter in a French restaurant, "that I think ought to be considered by sufferers from stomach complaints. I believe that much of this class of trouble is due to people's persistency in eating the same kind of bread for weeks, months and sometimes years, without a change.

"Now, nobody does that with any other kind of food; meat, for instance, or vegetables, or fruit or other dessert. Yet the average man will eat the same kind of bread twice or even three times a day and think himself wise. The stomach, unless it is of extraordinary constitution, will naturally get tired of this monotony and refuse properly to digest this eternal bread. Then the bread eater knows he has dyspepsia and starts on a course of dieting—generally sticking religiously to the same old bread—that most often leaves him in worse plight than ever.

"There are many varieties of bread—corn, rye, whole wheat, graham, Boston brown, aerated, barley, Vienna and French bread. All of these differ in the making and the material, and if, the average man would only take a turn at some of them for a change from his regular loaf he would find himself healthier and happier."—New York Sun.

Moving Cheese.

"Will you start the cheese this way, please?" said the thin boarder at dinner.

"It's not time for cheese yet," said the fat boarder.

"No, but if you start it now it will probably get here by the time I'm ready for it."—Yonkers Statesman.

RHEUMATISM CAN NOT BE RUBBED AWAY

When the joints are sore and swollen, and the muscles throbbing with the pain of Rheumatism, relief must be had at once, and it is natural to rub the affected parts with liniments, oils, etc. This treatment does good in a way, by temporarily relieving the pain and reducing the inflammation, but has no effect on the disease itself, because Rheumatism is more than skin deep; it is in the blood and cannot be rubbed away. Rheumatism is brought on by indigestion, weak kidneys, poor bowel action, stomach troubles and a general sluggish condition of the system. The refuse and waste matters, which should be carried off through the natural avenues of bodily waste, are left to sour and form uric acid and other irritating poisons which are absorbed by the blood, making it thin, weak and acrid. Then instead of nourishing the different nerves, muscles, joints and tissues it fills them with poison to produce the aches, pains and other disagreeable symptoms of the disease. Rheumatism is usually worse in Winter for the reason that cold and dampness are exciting causes. The nerves become excited and sting with pain, the muscles are sore and drawn, the joints swollen and stiff and the sufferer lives in intense agony; and if the disease is not checked it often leaves its victims helpless cripples for life. Rheumatism cannot be rubbed away but it can be driven from the blood by S. S. S. Being a perfect blood purifier this great remedy soon produces a complete change in the entire circulation; the thin, acrid blood is made pure and rich, and as it goes through the body nourishes and soothes the irritated nerves, eases the throbbing muscles, and dissolves and carries out of the system the irritating particles in the joints which are keeping up the pain and inflammation. S. S. S. cures Rheumatism permanently, and in addition tones up the digestion and stimulates the different members of the body to their full duty so there is no cause for another attack. Do not waste time trying to rub Rheumatism away, but get it out of the blood with S. S. S. so that the cold and dampness of Winter will not keep you in continual pain and agony. Special book on Rheumatism and any medical advice will be given free.

While at work for the F. C. & P. R. R. in the swampy region, I contracted Rheumatism and was completely helpless for about four months and spent over \$150.00 with doctors, but got worse every day, and finally quit them and began S. S. S. I took a few bottles and was cured sound and well. My health is now splendid, and I weigh 175 pounds. There is a lady living near me who is now taking S. S. S. for acute Rheumatism. For two months she could not turn herself in bed, but since beginning your medicine about three weeks ago has improved rapidly, and is now able to sit up. I can recommend S. S. S. to all suffering from Rheumatism. Ulah, N. C. S. C. LASSITER.

I was severely troubled with Rheumatism. I had it in my knees, legs and ankles, and any one who has ever had Rheumatism knows how excruciating the pain is and how it interferes with one at work. I was truly in bad shape—having been bothered with it for ten years, off and on. A local physician advised me to use S. S. S. I did so. After taking two bottles I noticed the soreness and pain were greatly reduced. I continued the medicine and was thoroughly cured; all pain, soreness and inflammation gone. I recommend S. S. S. to all Rheumatic sufferers. J. L. AGNEW, Mt. Vernon, O.

808 E. Greenbrier St. Mt. Vernon, O. The thin, acrid blood is made pure and rich, and as it goes through the body nourishes and soothes the irritated nerves, eases the throbbing muscles, and dissolves and carries out of the system the irritating particles in the joints which are keeping up the pain and inflammation. S. S. S. cures Rheumatism permanently, and in addition tones up the digestion and stimulates the different members of the body to their full duty so there is no cause for another attack. Do not waste time trying to rub Rheumatism away, but get it out of the blood with S. S. S. so that the cold and dampness of Winter will not keep you in continual pain and agony. Special book on Rheumatism and any medical advice will be given free.

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