

A House of Mystery

OR, THE GIRL IN BLUE

CHAPTER XVIII.

Britten was, I immediately detected, one of those men whose well-learned air of fussy sympathy, whose unruffled good humor, and whose quick perception enabled him to gauge to a nicety his patient's character, and thus to ingratiate himself. By the younger people he was, no doubt, pronounced clever on account of his age and known experience, while old ladies—those whose very life depended upon regularly seeing the doctor—declared him to be "such a dear, kind man." Upon the family doctor's manner alone depends the extent of his popularity and the size of his practice. The most ignorant charlatan who ever held a diploma can acquire a wide practice if he is only shrewd enough to humor his patients, to take pains to feign the deepest interest in every case, and assume an outward show of superior knowledge. In medicine, he the man ever so clever, if he has no tact with his patients his surgery bell will remain for ever silent.

Dr. Britten was a shrewd old fellow; a bit of a bungler, who made up for all defects by that constant good humor which people like in a medical man. "Don't worry, my dear sir; don't worry," he urged, when he had finished. "Rest well, and you'll be right again very soon."

"But the events of last night?" I said. "A man made a dastardly attempt upon my life, and I intend to secure his arrest."

"Yes, yes, I know," he answered, patting me on the shoulder with a familiarity which I reflected that I had never seen eyes upon him till half an hour before. "But take my advice, and don't reflect upon it."

"If you know, then perhaps you'll kindly give me some explanation?" I said, resenting his manner. He was treating me as he would a child.

"I only know what you've told me," he responded. "It's a strange story, certainly. But don't you think that it is, greater part of it, imagination?"

"Imagination!" I cried, starting up angrily. "I tell you, Doctor Britten—of whatever your name is—that it is no imagination. The wound on my head is sufficient proof of that."

"The wound was inflicted by yourself," he answered calmly. "You accidentally ran against the statue."

"I don't believe it," I said bluntly. "It's all a confounded conspiracy, and, moreover, you are staking your professional reputation by assisting in it."

He shrugged his shoulders and raised his grey eyebrows with an expression of regret.

"I have been called to you, my dear sir, because you have met with an accident," he said. "I have merely given you the best of my advice—namely, to remain quiet, and not trouble about anything that has passed. Your brain requires rest after the severe shock it has received."

"Doctor Britten," I said determinedly, "I quite understand the meaning of your vague words. You believe that I'm not quite right in my mind."

"No, no," he assured me quickly. "I did not say that. Pray do not misunderstand me. I merely advise rest and perfect quiet. Indeed, you would be far better in bed for a few days—far better."

"I know my own feelings best, thanks," I replied, for his manner, although it might impress nervous old ladies, aroused within me a strong resentment.

"Exactly. But surely you should, for your own sake, attend to the suggestions of your medical adviser?"

"You have formed wrong conclusions—entirely wrong conclusions," I laughed. "Is it likely that I shall take notice of anything you say when you believe that I'm not responsible for my actions?" I had watched his face carefully, and I knew that, like the dark-faced young man and Gill, the servant, he believed my brain unbalanced.

"I assure you, my dear sir, you entirely misunderstand me," he protested. "I merely say—"

"Oh, enough!" I cried angrily, turning upon my heel and leaving the room abruptly. I was sick of the chattering old idiot, who evidently believed that I was not responsible for my actions.

Down the wide oak stairs I passed, and in the great hall, which seemed to run the whole length of the house, and was filled with stands of armor, lattered banners, and trophies of the chase, I encountered the pale young man who had sent for old Britten.

I was passing him by, intent upon exploring this strange house in which I found myself, when, approaching me, he said—

"Would you please come into the library for one moment?"

"The library?" I asked, looking at him, puzzled. "Where is it?"

He opened a door close by, and I followed him into a comfortable study, lined with books from floor to ceiling. In the centre was a large writing-table littered with papers, while close beside was another smaller table, very severe and business-like.

"Well?" I inquired. "What do you want?"

"This telegram has just arrived," he answered excitedly, unlocking a drawer in the smaller writing-table, and taking out a telegram, which he handed to me.

Puzzled, I took the flimsy paper and read the words written thereon, as follows:—

"We are to-day in receipt of following telegram from our Vancouver branch—'Inform Wilford Heaton that Charles Mawson, Dawson City, has struck it seven dollars to pan.' Bank of British North America, London."

Such a message was utterly unintelligible to me.

"Well?" I inquired, raising my eyes and looking at him, surprised. "I don't see why this Charles Mawson, whoever he is, need hasten to tell me that. What does it matter to me?"

"Matter? My dear sir! Matter?" he cried, staring at me, as though in wonder. "There must, I think, be something the matter with you."

"Well, perhaps you'll kindly explain what it means?" I said. "I have, I assure you, no idea."

"Why, it means," he said, his face betraying his intense excitement—"it means that Woodford's report is correct, that there is, after all, rich gold on the concession; in short, that, being owner of one of the most valuable placer concessions, you are a millionaire!"

"That's all very interesting," I remarked with a smile, while he stood staring at me in abject wonder.

"I fear," he said, "that you're not quite yourself to-day. The injury to your head has possibly affected you."

"No, it hasn't," I snapped quickly. "I'm quite as clear-headed as you are."

"Then I should have thought that to any man in his sane senses such a telegram as that would have been extremely gratifying," he observed.

"Now, tell me," I said; "do you know who I am?"

"I think I do. You are Mr. Wilford Heaton."

"And you tell me that I'm a millionaire?"

"I do, most certainly."

"Then, much as I regret to be compelled to say it, young man," I answered, "I am of opinion that you're a confounded liar."

"But Mawson has struck the gold seven dollars to the pan," he pointed out in protest.

"Well, what in the name of Fortune has it to do with me if he's struck it a thousand dollars to the handful?" I cried.

"I should be inclined to say it had a great deal to do with you as holder of the concession," he answered quite coolly.

"Oh, bother the concession," I said hastily. "I don't understand anything whatever about it, and, what's more, I don't want to be worried over any mining swindles." Then I added, sinking into the padded chair before the writing-table, "You seem to know all about me. Tell me, now—what's your name?"

"My name?" he echoed, staring at me blankly, as though utterly puzzled.

"Well, I thought you knew it long ago, Mr. Gedge—Reginald Gedge."

"And what are you, pray?"

"I'm your secretary."

"My secretary!" I echoed, gasping in amazement. Then I added, "Look here, you're trying to mislead me, all of you. I have no secretary—I've never had one. All this chatter about mines and concessions and such things is pure and simple rubbish."

"Very well," he answered with a slight sigh. "If you would have it so it must be. Britten has already said that you are somewhat confused after your accident."

"Britten be hanged!" I roared. "I'm no more confused than you are. All I want is a straightforward explanation of how I came here, in this house."

He smiled, pityingly I thought. That old medical idiot had apparently hinted to both the servant and this young prig, who declared himself my secretary, that I was not responsible for my actions; therefore, what could I expect?

"The explanation is one which I regret I cannot give you," he answered. "All I want is your instructions what to wire to Mawson."

"Oh, bother Mawson!" I cried angrily. "Wire him whatever you like, only don't mention his name again to me. I don't know him, and don't desire to make any acquaintance either with him or his confounded pans."

"I shall send him congratulations, and tell him to remain in Dawson City pending further instructions."

"He can remain there until the Day of Judgment, for all I care," I said, a remark which brought a smile to his pale features.

A brief silence fell between us. All this was absolutely bewildering. I had been struck down on the previous night in a street in Chelsea to find myself next day in a country house, and to be ecologically informed by a man who called himself my secretary that I was owner of a great gold concession and a millionaire. The whole thing seemed too utterly incredible.

I felt my head, and found it bandaged.

There was no mistake about the reality of it all. It was no curious chimera of the imagination.

Before me upon the blotting-pad were some sheets of blank note-paper. I turned them over in idle curiosity, and found embossed upon them the address in bold, black characters: "Denbury Court, near Budleigh, Salterton."

"Is this place Denbury Court?" I inquired.

"Yes."

"And whose guest am I, pray?"

"You are no one's guest. This is your own house," was his amazing response.

I turned towards him determinedly, and in a hard voice said—

"I think, Mr. Gedge, that you've taken leave of your senses. I've never heard of this place before, and am certainly not its owner. Are you certain you are not confounding me with some one else—some one resembling me in personal appearance?"

"Absolutely certain," he replied. "Your name is Wilford Heaton, and I repeat that I am your confidential private secretary."

I shook my head.

"Well," he said quickly, "here is some further proof;" and bending beside me he opened one of the drawers of the big writing-table, and took therefrom a number of blank forms, which he placed before me. In eagerness I read their printed heading. It was: "From Wilford Heaton, 108A, Winchester House, Old Broad Street, London, E.C."

"Well, what are those used for?" I asked in wonder.

"They are used at the City Office," he answered, tossing them back into the drawer.

"And you tell me I am wealthy?" I said, with a cynical laugh.

"Your banker's pass-book should be sufficient proof of that," he answered; and taking the book from an iron safe let into the opposite wall, he opened it and placed it before me.

I glanced at the cover. Yes, there was no mistake. It was my own pass-book.

My eyes fell upon the balance standing to my credit, and the largeness of the figures held me open-eyed in astonishment.

It was wealth beyond all my wildest dreams.

"And that is mine—absolutely mine?" I inquired, when at last I found tongue.

"Certainly," he replied, a moment later adding, "It is really very strange that I have to instruct you in your own private affairs."

"Why have I an office in the City?" I asked, for that point was puzzling.

"In order to carry on your business."

"What business?"

"That of financial agent."

I smiled at the absurdity of the idea. I had never been a thrifty man; in fact I had never had occasion to trouble my head about finance, and, truth to tell, had always been, from a lad, a most arrant dunce at figures.

"I fear I'm a sorry financier," I remarked for want of something better to say.

"You are acknowledged to be one of the shrewdest and the soundest in the City of London," Gedge answered.

"Well," I remarked, closing the pass-book, securing the flap, and handing it back to him, "all I have to say is that this last hour that has passed has been absolutely replete with mystery. I can make nothing of all these things you tell me—absolutely nothing. I shall begin to doubt whether I'm actually myself very soon."

"It would be better to rest a little, if I might advise," he said, in a more deferential tone than before. "Britten suggested repose. That blow has upset you a little. To-morrow you'll be quite right again, I feel sure."

"I don't intend to rest until I've cleared up this mystery," I said determinedly, rising from the table.

At that moment, however, the door opened, and turning quickly, I was confronted by an angular, bony-faced, lantern-jawed woman, whose rouged and powdered face and juvenility of dress struck me as utterly ludicrous. She was fifty, if a day, and although her face was wrinkled and brown where the artificial complexion had worn off, she was nevertheless attired in a manner becoming a girl of twenty.

"Oh, my dear Wilford! Whatever has happened?" she cried in alarm, in a thin, unmusical voice, when she beheld the bandages around my head.

I looked at her in mingled surprise and amusement; she was so doll-like and ridiculous in her painted juvenility.

"Mr. Heaton accidentally struck his head against the statue in the drawing-room, madam," explained Gedge. "Doctor Britten has assured me that the injury is not at all serious. A little rest is all that is necessary."

"My dear Wilford! Oh, my dear Wilford! Why didn't you call me at once?"

"Well, madam," I answered, "that was scarcely possible, considering that I had not the honor of your acquaintance."

"What!" she wailed. "You—you can't really stand there and coolly tell me that you don't know me?"

"I certainly assert, madam, that I have absolutely no knowledge whatever of whom you may be," I said with some dignity.

"Is your brain so affected, then, that you actually fail to recognize me—Mary your wife?"

"You!" I gasped, glaring at her, dumbfounded. "You my wife! Impossible!"

(To be Continued.)

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

O'Hagan—"O! have found the man that hit me with a brick as O! was passing the alley, Mr. Murphy."

Mr. Murphy—"And what did you do with him?"

O'Hagan—"Nolthin'. 'Twas all a mistake—the man was only doing his duty. He thought O! was a policeman in plain clothes."

ON THE FARM

HIGH PRICED BUTTER IN ENGLAND.

Prof. G. L. McKay, writing in *Hoard's Dairyman* about the English butter market says:

"The highest selling butter that I found in the English market was the famous B. F. blue print, what is commonly called the French roll. It is an unsalted butter made from raw cream. This butter is sold for four cents higher per pound than any butter in the London market. Following this in price I found what is called the Danish selected and then the Irish. I believe it is the uniform quality of the Danish butter that has enabled the Danes to get the hold on the English market that they have at the present time."

"The English people are not, now I speak in regard to the dealers, unanimous in favor of pasteurizing. I have heard some dealers say the pasteurizing would cost the Danes the English market. However, among the large dealers, they seem to favor the Danish butter. I examined a lot of butter in the dairy markets of England. I examined some butter to find out if possible how much butterfat or how much water, butter should contain to be suited to that market. The driest butter found in that market was made in New York, 92 per cent. fat, while the high selling Danish and French butter showed 85. I spoke to a leading Danish authority on this subject. I asked him concerning the amount of water in their butter. He said butter was made to be spread on bread and this couldn't be done very well without water in the butter. The Danes have increased the per cent. of water in their butter during the past five years. I am not an advocate of selling water. The Irish butter contained more water than any butter sold in the English market. It is like some of our American butter, it contains a lot of water and shows it. The Danish butter contained a lot of water and did not show it."

SUMMER CARE OF CALVES.

If we should have cows that will produce large yields of milk and return the profits which are so much desired we must invariably raise that cow from childhood. The practice in handling calves during the summer months usually is to turn them to grass as soon as possible and let them take their chances from that time forward. Where this practice prevails, is it any wonder that we hear so much of cows being kept at a loss, and cows that return but a meagre profit? How could it be otherwise? If we would have the cow, we must take care of the calf.

Our most successful dairymen are all agreed that the best results cannot be obtained from calves that are turned to grass during the first summer. Calves that are turned out to grass and allowed to shift for themselves are continually plagued by flies and other insects, besides suffering from the heat, and in some instances enough pasture for a bare subsistence is hard to obtain.

To rear the best calves, one must stable them during the first summer. A clean, airy box stall should be provided for them and they should be fed and watered regularly. If they are still receiving milk, great care should be exercised to keep the vessels in which they are fed, absolutely clean, for in hot weather, they will soon become filthy if not carefully attended to in this respect. Freshly cut grass or a good quality of clover hay should be supplied them in quantities that they will eat up clean. A little grain, such as oats and bran, fed the youngsters along with their other feed at this time will not be wasted. Any care and feed which this method of handling the calves throughout the summer may entail will be more than paid in the future when the calf becomes a mature cow and yields her product at the pail.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

The lambs should be dipped to rid them of ticks. Ticks make the lambs poor, and the sheep also.

It is easier to keep cows from getting out by fixing the fences good beforehand, than it is to break them of the bad habit after they once get it.

It is not usually the best economy on a small farm to keep more than one breed. It requires more care to keep the breeds pure; and it is not usually considered good economy to cross one thoroughbred upon another.

The trouble with many beginners is, they become disgusted and quit if they cannot get the same results in a few months that others are getting who have been breeding, selecting and culling for years. The squab industry, like any other enterprise that is worth undertaking, is not meant for lazy quitters. It requires time, patience and intelligent perseverance.

The proper time to put the honey sections on is just at the beginning of the honey harvest, and not before—when the bees begin to build little burr-combs in parts of the hive. If put on before, it makes a loafing place for the bees, when they should be at work down in the brood chamber. Besides, they are apt to tear the foundation down and scil the sections. But don't neglect putting them on till the season is very far advanced.

FARM NOTES.

Dragging corn, either when it just comes up or at three or four inches, will save lots of trouble later. Use a spike-tooth harrow.

Begin to cut hay early. When grass

is just coming into bloom it contains a large proportion of sugar and gum, most easily digested; but these, as the plants mature, are rapidly changed into starch and woody fibre.

A successful farmer must give the same close attention to his business in all its details that the successful railroad-man or manufacturer gives to his business. That as railroad managers and manufacturers so endeavor to conduct their business as to save in small matters, so should the farmer conduct his business, feeling assured that if he saves in small matters and looks after small details, the aggregates will take care of themselves.

The day has gone by when a man can simply buy a farm, raise corn, feed it out, and make money. That has been possible in the past, but that is not farming. Men have been selling their farms by the bushel, the pound and the quart. Now they must begin to buy them back again, and the regaining of fertility must necessarily be a period of small profits, under the most skillful treatment by the best farmers, well versed in what their land needs, and how best to supply it, and with a thorough knowledge of how to feed stock profitably. This is a science, and its best results can not be brought about by chance, by hand labor without brain work, by act of Congress or by combination of interest.

A CASE OF VIVISECTION

MOST REMARKABLE OPERATION ON A DOG.

Proves That Diseased Parts of the Lining May be Successfully Removed.

Prof. Ernst Sauerbruch, an eminent specialist of Marburg Institute, Germany, last week at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in New York, performed a remarkable operation of vivisection. Standing with an assistant, within an immense air-tight glass cabinet, the surgeon cut open a fox terrier which had been put under the influence of ether, and with the animal's lungs exposed, removed a portion of the esophagus.

The purpose of the demonstration was to show that the danger of operating within the chest cavity, necessarily involved the exposure of the lungs to the heavy atmospheric pressure, has been obviated. Had the dog's lungs been subjected to the ordinary air pressure they would immediately have collapsed, the air breathed in not being sufficient to keep the lungs inflated. To do away with the heavy air pressure a partial vacuum was created within the cabinet.

REDUCED AIR PRESSURE.

The ordinary atmospheric pressure, about fifteen pounds to the square inch, or 760 millimetres, was reduced, inside the cage, by from eight to ten millimetres, not a very great difference, but sufficient to allow the bared lungs to work freely.

When all was ready Prof. Sauerbruch and his assistant, Dr. Croton, of Marburg Institute, stepped inside the glass compartment, taking a frisky fox terrier with them.

As the compressed air pump began to work Prof. Sauerbruch's assistant seized the dog, quickly bound it to the table, and forced its wriggling head through the opening in the glass wall. The head rested on a padded shelf.

To prevent any air escaping in a rubber cushion was fastened tightly about the dog's neck and secured to the rim of the orifice.

CUT DOGS LUNG.

The interior of the cabinet was light, even the top being of glass, and those gathered outside could plainly observe the delicate operation. The gentle heaving of the exposed lungs as the fox terrier drew in air from the outside was clearly seen.

Prof. Sauerbruch slowly cut away a portion of the esophagus and inserted the silver tube. Then he cut away a small part of one lung, catching the end with fine nippers.

The surgeon paused to watch the effect. The dog's breathing kept on as evenly as before. The operation was entirely satisfactory.

The great value of the achievement is, according to Professor Sauerbruch, that persons whose lungs have become infected may undergo an operation and have the affected parts cut away.

CLOCK AND WATCH FREAKS.

"A watch isn't necessarily dirty when it requires cleaning," says a watchmaker. "It may need cleaning when it hasn't even been worn. A common cause of this is that the oil in the works has dried up and become sticky, causing the watch to go slow, or even to stop. In this case, it not only wants cleaning, but also the addition of fresh oil. The best oil for this purpose is obtained from the jawbone of the porpoise, and kindred fish. Many watchmakers mix their own oil from various kinds. Clocks also stop for no apparent reason. During a thunderstorm, for instance, a clock may stop, only resuming work when minutes, days, or even weeks, have passed. Thunderstorms, again, have been responsible for the restarting of old clocks which had apparently retired altogether from active service."

MIGHT AS WELL NOT TELL.

Mayme—"Is Clara a good girl to tell a secret to?"

Maudie—"Oh, my no! Why she'll never tell a soul!"