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A. B. AUGER,
Downers Grove, Ill.

It seems to whisper to me, and I cannot understand. Hilda is cold and angry with me for meeting Ulric; I never see my uncle without fearing he has in some way heard of it. Gwendoline is most unhappy of us all; but she will tell me nothing. You say it is not the dreariness which drives you away?"

"I would sooner live in St. Gabriel's Grange than in any other house I have ever seen."
"You go because of Gwendoline?"
I was silent.
"If she took back her words, would you stay, Viola?"
"I would stay if I thought she would not use words like these again. But if I can help you as a friend, Annis I will stay, let your sisters say what they please."
"That is right and kind," she smiled, rising and kissing me. "Now I know Ulric and I am safe. Think what a dragon uncle Richard might get!"
She had been gone five or ten minutes, and I standing, half-hesitating, with my letter in my hand, pride rising against my last decision, when Lady Martin Pomeroy entered the room.

"So," she said tauntingly, "Miss Thorne puts on the tragedy-queen air, and demands an apology!"
"Your sister has misinterpreted me," I answered coldly; and at the sound of that sneering voice my hand tightened on the letter I had been about to destroy, and I met her eyes straight and calmly.
"As I did so, I could but think how lovely she was. Never before had she appeared so beautiful. There was a flush on her face, a glitter in her brilliant eyes, and her red-gold hair, hanging loose on the crimson gown, shone in the glow of the lamp as if light was given off from each gleaming thread. There was something magnetic in Gwendoline Pomeroy's loveliness which fascinated even those who denied her charms."
"You ask no withdrawal or explanation from me?"
"None," I replied coldly.
"Then you should, no woman of spirit would endure such words to be said to her face!"
"I am satisfied with Annis's assurance that your words were hasty, and that you would in future treat me as one lady treats another."

"Who says what I will do in future? I can give no promise myself," she cried. "And I have meant every word I have said. You were hired to be a spy, Miss Thorne, and a spy, if you stay, you will be!"
"Then I will not stay, Lady Martin; you may be assured of that."
"Oh, do you think I do not know," she cried passionately, "what it means? Your predecessors were employed as spies, and would have acted on their own watchfulness, and report to Mr. Gascoigne where we went and whom we met, so that if he did not approve everything, he would send us off like Gilbert and Ulric. Do you think I should care for that? No, but it is I who am to be followed by a detective, and this by my husband's orders, to be watched like a criminal by my own sisters, and by hired spies! Your predecessors were men," she continued, her voice shaking; "they could be duped by a look and cheated by a smile. And my uncle began to fear that the rascals might be worse than the disease, that his niece might fall in love with his secretary. So he engaged a woman for the business, who would see with sharper eyes and hear with sharper ears. And from the moment I heard your name I hated you, Viola Thorne!"

She stood before me with sparkling eyes and flushed face, her breath coming in short quick gasps, as in a voice intense and suppressed, the angry word came from her set lips.
"Do you think," I asked calmly, "that an English girl, a girl scarcely older than your sister Annis, Lady Martin, would undertake such duties as you have described? My only duties have to do with Mr. Gascoigne. What interest have I in your doings?"
"Interest! No! But that you are paid for it. Already, to-night, I have been watched, and you ask an apology from me!"
I tried to speak; but the impetuous rush of her words half frightened me. She was trembling as she uttered them.
"I have been suspected—always suspected—all my life! It is enough to drive one to evil. They may have something to suspect me for at last!" she said, with her short cynical laugh, sharp and intended; and after it came a wild sobbing cry and a flood of bitter tears, and Gwendoline sank into a chair and let her head fall on her arms, in a fit of uncontrolled hysterics.

CHAPTER IX.
I brought sal-volatile and water, and did all I could to restore her, half-terrified while by her cries. Suddenly she seized my hand.
"Is it true?" she gasped. "Can you swear it, that you are not here to watch me?"
"Indeed I am not. You are detaching yourself with fears and fanciful imaginings, mysteries and concealment where nothing of the kind exists. Not one question as to the proceedings of you or your sisters has crossed your uncle's lips in my hearing. Not one word have I spoken or will I ever speak of them that you are not all welcome to hear."
"Have you not said to him how we treated you, how wretched we tried to make you?"
"No," I replied firmly.
Still holding my hand, she gazed into my eyes with a look that seemed to search me through and through. Then she sighed.
"I wish I were like you," she said suddenly. "I believe you are honest and true. I do ask you to forgive me, and I ask you to stay at the Grange!"
"It is enough for me that you will be more just and kind in future, Lady Martin."
"I am speaking of the past. What can I know of the future? But no—I will be just to you. I do not think you would deceive me. I am not going to ask you, like Annis, to be my friend. I only ask to be left alone. Put your letter in the fire before I go."
I crushed it up and hid it upon the expiring embers, and it slowly consumed away. When nothing but the black ash was left, she turned away without a word and left me.

For some time after this things went on more pleasantly at St. Gabriel's Grange. Gwendoline was not friendly and confidential like Annis—it did not seem to be in her nature; but she pursued me no longer with scornful words and mocking looks. I knew she avoided my company, and I wondered and grieved a little, for that one glimpse of a nature beneath the crust of defiance made me long almost pitiably to know more of the real woman and sympathize in her sorrows. But, with the pride that will sooner meet death than seek help, she kept aloof even from her sisters. How could I, a stranger, expect to gain what was denied them?

I do not think Hilda Farquhar ever sought Gwendoline's confidence; to me she never altered. While Lady Martin ceased her enmity and Annis's friendship increased, to Hilda my existence was scarcely more than on the first night, and was contemptuously ignored; but I found that, while at the beginning her feeling had been all disdain, now a thread of genuine dislike was woven in and I felt that the blue eyes evaded meeting mine, but would at times rest a moment

on my face with a glance of hatred such as I had once met.
Yes, whatever innocent secrets Annis cherished, whatever fears Lady Martin Pomeroy could possess, Hilda had said there was nothing she wished to hide. What had I done that she should hate me?
"Hilda," I heard Annis say to her one day, when I was in the morning-room, and she had sought her sister in the conservatory, "will you come out with me this-morning?"
"Where are you going?" Hilda asked.
"To Gabriel's Walk," Annis half-whispered.
Gabriel's Walk was the path by the lake.

"Have you asked Mr. Gascoigne's companion to go with you? I suppose you are going to meet Ulric, and you appear to think she is a suitable person to accompany you."
"I shall not ask her if you go."
"Thank you. Do you suppose that I want to go—that it is particularly delightful to be your chaperon?"
"Sometimes you like going. Gilbert said he would try to see us this morning."
"Do you think I care to run the risk of offending uncle Richard, who will no doubt hear something of it, for the sake of Gilbert Gascoigne? Pray do not imagine I agree with you because I have helped you once or twice. I think Gilbert would be far better employed looking after his business."
"I am sure you like to see him?" cried Annis. "You know he does not neglect his work. I used to think you—"
"Pray spare me your thoughts," interrupted Hilda abruptly. "So long as you can get uncle Richard's companion to go with you, I should advise you to do so. Uncle Richard will gain a great deal of useful information."

"Not from Viola Thorne, I am sure!"
"No? You think she will keep quiet for her own sake? Possibly; it is of no concern to me."
"Am I, then, to tell Gilbert that you will not come to meet him because of uncle?"
"You can tell him what you please. He probably knows you are well versed in fabricating excuses."
Not an angry word did Annis speak. "You will not come?" she simply asked.
"I will not," her sister replied. Then Annis came and asked me, and I went. Gilbert asked no questions as to his cousin's absence, and Annis proffered no explanation. But I determined that, ere I went again, I must pause to consider well my place at the Grange, my duty to Mr. Gascoigne, and the position in which Annis, in her thoughtless eager happiness, was placing me. I could not act as Annis's confidante, and take these morning walks with Mr. Gilbert Gascoigne, if any haunting fear of discovery by my employer was to follow me.

It was very pleasant that day. I had never met any one who talked as Mr. Gascoigne talked, who was so clever and kind and handsome. We were the merest acquaintances, and were thrown together so peculiarly that our conversation was mainly confined to commonplaces. But I can remember now half he said that morning, the lively chat which gave me my first impression of Norbury, the artistic eyes which pointed out all that was fair and lovely in the scene around us, the lingering over the beauties of the Grange with a poet's admiration, yet with no covetous accent.
"My cousin and the heiresses now, you know," he said. "I think they are on probation. I have been on probation myself, and failed. Poor Annis will be out of it at last, and I do not know that I am sorry. Ulric has enough, and he only fears now they will say he courted her fortune."
"And Lady Martin," I said, "is married. She will have her husband's home."
It was the first time I had ventured to speak of Lord Martin Pomeroy. Even with Annis something in the strangeness of Gwendoline's presence at the Grange made me hesitate.

"Yes," he answered thoughtfully, a graver look in his face and in his brown eyes. Then came a smile. "And Hilda, you see, is to marry a duke; but even peers are not always rolling in wealth. The Grange would be no bad dowry."
"We could see the turrets and the big windows and the towers through the bare trees, and I fancied that, though his tone was light, he was gazing at it half-wistfully. Once it had been his home; it should have been his heritage. How could he help but love it?"
"How does business get on, Gilbert?" asked Annis smilingly, as we stood by the old wall near the wicket-gate. "You ought not to have time to come out in the morning."
"Oh, Carden is looking after the business. I am not of much use, I am afraid," he answered.

"It seems very hard," Annis said to me, as we crossed the park, "that Gilbert should not have the Grange, because his father left him very little, and his mother's property was all settled on Ulric. He had a legal training, his father being a lawyer; so he went into partnership with Mr. Carden at Norbury, but he lives with Ulric, you know. He is the best fellow in the world—next to Ulric; and they are very fond of each other. Ulric is so anxious that I should tell uncle Richard of my engagement, Viola; but, for Hilda's sake, I dare not."
"But what will you do?" I asked. "You must tell him at last."
"I do not know. I suppose Ulric will manage it somehow." And of Ulric she talked on untiringly until we reached the house.

(To be continued.)
MISSING LINKS.
The best specimens of alabaster carvings have been exhumed at Ninevah.
A century-old tortoise is exhibited in the museum at Uplands, in Colorado.
The greatest velocity attained by a whale when struck by a harpoon is nine miles an hour.
The English lord chancellor gets \$50,000 a year; the United States chief justice gets \$10,500.
At the Bombay zoological gardens the skin of a sea serpent sixty-four feet in length is on exhibition.
In several European countries, including France and Belgium, elections are always held on Sunday.
The deepest running stream in the world is said to be the Niagara river, just under the suspension bridge.
Kepler firmly believed the moon to be inhabited. He always spoke of the supposed people of that orb as "the Selenites."
A radish three feet eight inches in length and twenty-two inches in circumference is on exhibition at Winter Haven, Fla.
Automatic machines have been devised for use on a moving train which mechanically record the condition of every foot of the track.
The coat is in the fifteenth century first mentioned as an upper garment for men. All the seams were then covered with gold braid or lace.

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