# A House of Mystery

## OR, THE GIRL IN BLUE

CHAPTER XXII.—(Cont'd).

The day was brilliant. It was July in Devonshire, that fairest of all counties—and July there is always a superb month. The air, warm and balmy, was laden with a scent of roses and honeysuckle, and the only sounds that broke the quiet were the songs of the birds and the soft rustling of the trees.

I sat there trying to decide how to act.

For the first time it occurred to me that my position was one of a certain peril, for if I did not act with tact and caution, that woman who called herself my wife, aided by that idiot Britten, might declare that I was mad, and cause me to be placed beneath restraint. Therefore, to gain my freedom, it was evidently necessary that I should act with discretion and keep my own counsel.

I looked around upon the fair panorama of nature spread before me. The world was six years older than when I had known it. What national events had, I wondered, happaned in that time? Place yourself in my position, and picture to yourself the feeling of bewilderment that overcame me when I reflected upon what might or might not have transpired.

There crept over me a longing to escape from that place, the habitation of that awful woman with the powdered cheeks, and to return to London. All my life and pleasure had been centered in the giant capital, and to it I intended now to go back and seek, if possible, the broken thread of my history, which might lead me to an elucidation of the marvellous mystery.

The world around me, the calm blue sea, the cloudless sky, the green grass-lands, the soft whispering of the foliage seemed so peaceful that I could scarce believe that so much evil, so much of human malice, could exist. The tranquility of my surroundings induced within me a quieter frame of mind, and I set to planning carefully how I might escape and return to London.

To endeavor so to do openly would, I saw, be to draw upon me the spies of my hideous wife. Was I not believed by all to be insane? Then certainly I should not be allowed to go at large without some one at my side.

I wanted to be alone. The presence of a second person entertaining suspicions as to my sanity would seriously hamper me, and prevent me prosecuting the inquiries I intended to institute regarding my past. No. To escape successfully I should be compelled to fly to London, and once there alter my appearance and assume another name. Search would undoubtedly be made for me, but once in London I felt confident in being able to foil any efforts of my wife's agents.

Therefore I sat upon the stile and calmly matured my plans.

The chiming of a clock, apparently in the turret upon my own stables at Denbury, fell upon my ears. It struck one. Then the sharp ringing of a bell—the luncheon-bell—followed.

Gedge had told me that the place was near Budleigh Salterton. Was it near enough, I wondered, for me to walk there, and was there a station? There might, I reflected, be a map in the library. I would be compelled to trace it out and seek my route, for I was absolutely ignorant of that corner of Devonshire.

Yes, my best policy, I decided, was to return to the house, act as indifferently as possible, and meanwhile complete my plans for escape.

I retraced my steps to the house by the path I had traversed, and upon the lawn was met by the man Gill, who announced—

"The luncheon-bell has rung, sir. I hope you feel a little better, sir."

"Oh, much better," I answered airily, and with an effort at self-possession followed him into the imitation old-oak dining-room, which Gedge had shown me during our tour of the place.

The woman with the powdered cheeks was already seated at the head of the table, erect and stately, with an expression of hauteur which ill became her.

"I hope you feel better after your walk," she said, as I seated myself.

"Oh, much better," I responded in a tone of irony. "The pain has practically passed."

"You should really rest," she said, in that squeaky, artificial tone which so jarred upon my nerves. "Do take the doctor's advice."

It was on the tip of my tongue to make a further unwriteable remark regarding the doctor, but I managed to control myself and reply—

"Yes, I think after luncheon I shall lie down for a little time. I have, however, some pressing letters to write first."

"Let Gedge attend to your correspondence for to-day," she urged, with that mock juvenility which rendered her so hideously ridiculous.

"No," I responded. "I have, unfortunately, to attend to several pressing matters personally. Afterwards I will rest."

"No, there's a dear," she said.

I bit my lip. She nauseated me when she used that affectionate term. The only woman I loved was Mabel Anson, but whether she were still alive, or whether married, I knew not. The very thought that I was bound in matrimony to this woman sitting in the high-backed chair of carved oak was disgusting. I loathed her.

How I continued to eat the dishes Gill handed me I know not, nor do I remember what conversation passed between my pseudo wife and myself as we sat there. Many were the abrupt and painful silences which fell between us.

She struck me as an ascetic, strong-minded woman, who, before others, fawned upon me with an affected devotion which in one of her age was ludicrous; yet when we were alone she was rigid and overbearing, with the positive air of one who believed me far beneath her alike in social station and in intellect. When Gill was absent she spoke in a hard, patronizing tone, which so angered me that with great difficulty I retained my temper

Yet it was my policy, I knew, to conceal my thoughts, and to lead her to believe that the words I had uttered, and my failure to recognize her, were owing to the blow I accidentally received, and that I was now, just as I had been before, her husband.

What a hollow sham that meal was! Now that I think of it I cannot refrain from smiling at my extraordinary position, and how I showed her delicate attention in order to the more impress her of my solicitude for her welfare.

When at last she rose it was with a hope that I would go to my room and rest.

I seized that opportunity.

"I shall," I answered. "But don't let them call me for dinner. I will have something when I wake. Britten has ordered perfect quiet."

"Very well," she answered. Then turning to Gill, she said, "You hear. Mr. Heaton is not to be aroused at dinner."

"Yes, madam," answered the man, bowing as we both passed out.

At once I walked along to the library, shut the door, and locked it.

I had much to do to prepare for my flight.

Yes, as I had expected, there was an ordinance map of the Teignmouth district tacked to the wall; and searching, I quickly found Denbury marked upon it, standing on the Exmouth road over the High Land, or Orcombe, half way between that place and Budleigh-Salterton. The South-Western Railway ran, I saw, from Exmouth to London, by way of Exeter, and my first impulse was to walk into Exmouth, and take train thence. The fact that I was probably known at that station occurred to me, therefore I made up my mind to avoid the terminus and join the train at Lympston, a small station further towards Exeter.

Taking up my pen I made a rough sketch-plan of my route, which passed Littleham church, then by the left-hand road struck across country, crossing the high road to Exmouth at right angles, continuing through the village of Withycombe Raleigh, and keeping straight on until it joined the main road to Exeter. At the commencement of the village of Lympston it was necessary, I saw, to turn sharp to the left, and at the end of the road I should find the station, close to the river Exe.

In order to avoid mistaking the road and entering the town of Exmouth, I made a full and careful plan, which, when completed, I placed in my pocket. The distance, I calculated roughly, was between five and six miles over a road rather difficult to find without a map.

Among the books on the table I found a Bradshaw, with the page of local trains turned down, and from it learned that a train with connection from London stopped at Lympston at 7.55 p.m., while the train in connection with the up-mail from Exeter stopped there at 8.20. The latter I decided upon taking.

The fact that I had expressed my desire to sleep would prevent Gill coming to call me at the dinner-hour and by the time I was missed I should be well on my way to London.

The question of money occurred to me. I had noticed some loose gold and a couple of five-pound notes in one of the drawers which Gedge had opened, and having a duplicate set of keys in my pocket, I transferred the whole—a little under twelve pounds—to my pocket.

Then I took out my cheque-book. It was too large to be carried in my pocket, therefore I tore out a couple of dozen or so, folded them, and placed them in an envelope.

I recognized that I could draw money with them, yet the bank need not know my whereabouts. If these people, who would, I suppose, call themselves "my friends," made active search to find the fugitive "madman," they would certainly obtain no clue from my bankers.

In the same drawer as the cheque-book I found a black leather portfolio, securely locked.

The latter fact impressed me. Everything else was open to my secretary, who possessed keys, both to writing-table and safe. But this was locked, apparently because therein were contained certain private papers that I had wished to keep from his eyes.

No man, whoever he may be, reposes absolute confidence in his secretary. Every one has some personal matter, the existence of which he desires to preserve secret to himself alone.

I drew forth the locked portfolio, and placed it upon the blotting-pad before me. It was an expansive wallet, of a kind such as I remembered having seen carried by bankers' clerks in the City from bank to bank, attached by chains to the belts around their waists.

Surely upon my ring I must possess a key to it. I looked, and found a small brass key.

It fitted, and a moment later I had unlocked the wallet and spread my own private papers before me.

What secrets of my lost life, I wondered, might not these carefully preserved letters and documents contain?

In eager, anxious wonder I turned them over.

Next instant a cry of dismay broke involuntarily from my lips, as within trembling fingers I held one of those papers--a letter addressed to me.

I could scarce believe my own eyes as I read it. Yet the truth was plain—hideously plain.

(To be Continued.)

### NEW CONSUMPTION CURE.

It is believed by the members of the Academy of Science of Paris that an effective cure for consumption has at last been found. After a long series of experiments on patients in various parts of the earth and at different altitudes, they have declared in favor of establishing captive balloons at heights where germs, dust, and smoke never penetrate. To cure consumption, they state, it is merely necessary to give the sufferer plenty of absolutely pure air, but nowhere on the face of this earth can pure air be obtained. Experiments show that city air is so saturated with gases and polluted by dust and germs that it is a wonder the human lung even of a healthy person can breathe it. In the country the air is much better, but by no means pure. On the high mountain-side improvement is still greater, but even there germs are more or less common. There are dust, pollen, and flying matter from the distant cities.

### LITERARY TASTES.

Mr. Justrich—"I want to get some books for my library"

Dealer—"Ah, yes. What style of works do you prefer?"

Mr. Justrich—"Well, you see, my wallpaper is terrycottar and my bookcase is mahogany; I want something that'll match them, you know."

# ON THE FARM

### THE DRY MEAL SYSTEM.

Hopper feeding is recommended by the Maine Experiment Station, and described in the report of the Massachusetts Station as follows: "When the cockerels are taken out for finishing, the pullets of the same age, are moved to the grassy range, still occupying the same portable houses in which they were raised. At this time the method of feeding is changed, and dry food is kept by them constantly, in troughs with slated sides and broad detachable roofs, so it may not be soiled or wasted. The troughs are from six to ten feet long, with the sides five inches high. The lath slats are two inches apart and the troughs are sixteen inches high from floor to roof. The roofs project about two inches at the sides and effectually keep out the rain except when high winds prevail.

"The roof is easily removed by lifting one end and sliding it endwise on the opposite gable end, on which it rests. The trough can then be filled and the roof drawn back into place without lifting it. This arrangement is the best thus far found for saving food from waste and keeping it in good condition. When dry mash is used in it there may be considerable waste by the finer parts being blown away. When used for that purpose it is necessary to put it in a sheltered place out of the high winds. In separate compartments of the troughs, they are given cracked corn, whole wheat, oats, dry meal mixture, grit, dry cracked bone, oyster shell and charcoal." The dry meal is a mixture made up as follows: 2 parts good wheat bran and one part each, middlings, corn meal, gluten meal or brewers' grain, linseed meal and beef scraps. The troughs are located about the field in sufficient numbers to fully accommodate all the birds.

'The results of this method of feeding are satisfactory. The labor of feeding is far less than that required by any other method. The birds do not hang around the troughs and over-eat, but help themselves, a little at a time, and range off, hunting, or playing and come back again, when so inclined, to the food supply at the troughs. There is no rushing or crowding about the attendant, as is usual at feeding time, where large numbers are kept together.

"For the last eight years the first eggs have been lain when the pullets were from four months and ten days, to four months and twenty days old. There is some danger of the pullets getting developed and commencing laying too early for the best results, under this system of feeding. In order to prevent such conditions, the houses should not be located too close to each other, or to the feed troughs, and a large range should be given them so that they may be induced to work, which they will do if given the opportunity, early after their removal to the fields. Should the birds show too great precocity, and that they are liable to commence laying in August, the supply of cracked corn and wheat in the feeding trough is reduced, or taken away altogether, which causes them to eat the oats and dry meal instead, and they continue to grow and develop without getting ripe too soon."

### FARM NOTES.

Men can no longer get ahead much by doing as their fathers did; in fact, oftentimes they can hardly make a bare living when they own their farm and are out of debt, and still if they would put their brains to work and make some changes corresponding to the changed conditions, they might live well and lay up money.

It is easier to repair a bridge or stable floor than an injured horse. It is cheaper to keep the harness and buggy in good repair than to purchase an artificial limb for yourself or wife, after an accident. It is better to keep the outlet of a tile drain open than to have to do all the work over after it becomes inoperative. Don't let mowers, harrows, scythes, forks, etc., remain where stock will get hurt on them.

It is only necessary to observe a few points to make a good and permanent road, and the first of these is the grading. The road must not only be thrown up so as to be high above the water which may gather in the ditches at the sides, but there must be provision for drawing this water off so that it shall not stand and soften the fill on which the road is made. The grading of the road should be done in the early part of the season, not later than July, so that it can be settled and compacted before the metal is applied. It will always be necessary to regrade a few weeks after the first grading, as some parts of the road will settle more than others, leaving depressions and inequalities which must be remedied.

### RULES FOR TOMMY ATKINS.

**Things Which the British Soldier is Forbidden to Do.**

Civilians have no idea of the enormous number of seemingly harmless things the British soldier is, or has been, forbidden to do.

Smoking of any kind in the streets, for instance, was a crime (all breaches of rules and regulations, it should be explained, are "crimes" in Army parlance) until comparatively recently. And to this day, in most garrison towns, Tommy is forbidden to carry parcels in the streets when in uniform.

Nor may the married soldier carry his child in his arms, or wheel it in a perambulator. To be caught carrying an umbrella is another serious crime, as is also wearing "cut-down" caps, or non-regimental (commonly called "square-pushing") boots, or generally in any way altering uniform clothing, contrary to regulations.

Not having the hair cut to the proper regulation length, again, is one of the commonest of Army crimes, as is also "neglecting to shave." And most people can remember the periodical rumpus that used to be caused, every St. Patrick's Day, through Irish soldiers being punished for wearing shamrock on their caps, or in their buttonholes.

In some ultra-smart corps even it is a crime for Tommy to presume to lace up his boots in any other fashion than the accepted regimental pattern. And in the same way he is liable to punishment if he carries, when "walking-out," any other cane than that supplied—on payment—by his superiors, and which has emblazoned on its burnished nickel-silver top the regiment's crest and motto.

### THE APPARENTLY DROWNED

**How They are Dealt With by the Schaffer System.**

In 1903 Professor Schaffer of Edinburgh, Scotland, professor of physiology, brought forward a new idea in the matter of resuscitating the apparently drowned. It has been adopted by the Royal Life Saving Society.

By the Schaffer system, when a body is taken from the water it is without delay placed prostrate face downward. The man attempting resuscitation is advised to kneel over or to one side of the body. Then, placing the hands flat across the small of the patient's back the thumbs almost meeting and the fingers resting over the lower ribs, the man should lean forward and press steadily and then relax, and continue this movement at an average of twelve to fifteen times a minute. By this means the water, if there is any, is driven from the patient's lungs, while breathing is induced.

The advantages of the Schaffer method are in its very simplicity of operation, while the position of the body induces the removel of mucus and does not allow of the tongue falling back in the throat.

### AVERAGE LENGHT OF LIFE.

The man who lives till he is more than a century old and the child who dies in infancy are alike included in the law of overages. They balance each other's chances, as it were. Of 100,000 people living at the age of 10, only 95,614 will live to the age of 21, only 82,284 will be living at 40, only 49 will be living at 96, and only 9 at 97. At 39, the average man may take it that he has under 35 years to live; at 40, under 28 years; at 50, under 21 years; at 60 under 14 years. In each and all of these cases, how he lives will determine whether he will have a longer life or a shorter life, but the average will infallibly work out within a space of ninety years.

### METHOD FOR TESTING EGGS.

A simple method for testing eggs, which comes from Germany, is based upon the fact that the air chamber in the flat end of an egg increases with age. If the egg is placed in a solution of common salt it will show an increasing inclination to float with the long axis vertical. By watching this tendency the age of the egg can be determined almost to a day. A fresh egg lies in a horizontal position at the bottom of the vessel; an egg from three to five days old shows an elevation at the flat end, so that its long axis forms an angle of twenty degrees and an egg a month old floats vertically upon the pointed end