OR, THE G

CHAPTER XXV.—(Cont'd).

I remembered that Gedge had shown me some official parchment which he had explained were concessions obtained from Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria. That this woman had been the means of securing to me the greater part of the enormous profits which I had apparently made within the past five years was certainly surprising.

"On the day I recovered consciousness—the day of my departure from Denbury—I was shown some documents, but took but little heed of them," I said.

"You admit, however, that the employment of British capital in Bulgaria has realized a very handsome profit, and that the greater part of it has gone into your own pockets."

"I suppose that is so," I responded. "It is to you that I am indebted for those concessions?"

"Certainly."

"Are you, then, an ambassadress of the Principality of Bulgaria?"

"Well, yes—if you choose to put it so."

"Then, as I understand, it is with some further financial object that you have sought me this evening?"

"Exactly."

This latest development of the affair was certainly most remarkable. I had never dreamed that to this hitherto unknown woman I had been indebted for the unparalleled success which had attended my career during those last six years. Yet, from the facts she subsequently placed before me, it would seem that it was at her instigation that I first dabbled in finance. She, or rather her agents, had obtained for me the negotiation of a substantial loan to Prince Ferdinand, and this had been followed by all sorts of concessions, not one of which had turned out badly.

The mysterious Edna, whom I had always believed to be a typical blouse-and-bicycle girl of the true Kensington type, was actually a political agent of that most turbulent of all the European States.

I sat looking at her in wonderment. She possessed a superb carriage, a smart, well-dressed figure, a smiling intelligent face, white even teeth, a complexion just a trifle dark, but betraying no trace of foreign birth. Her English was perfect, her manner purely that of the patrician, while her surprising tact possessed all the finesse of an accomplished diplomatist.

"I confess that I have all along been in entire ignorance of my indebtedness to you," I said, after listening to her while she explained how obediently I had followed the instructions contained in the letters signed "Avel," and how I had so materially advanced the interests of the Principality that the thanks of the Bulgarian President, or Sobranje, had been tendered to me, and the Prince himself had a couple of years ago conferred upon me the highest distinction within his power.

Yet it was more than strange that while this shrewd grey-eyed woman, the possessor of the secret of that puzzling crime, held aloof from me, she had ingeniously contrived that I should become the unwitting catspaw of an unstable State.

I was thinking of Mabel—my thoughts were always of my lost love—and I was wondering how I might obtain from this woman the secret of her whereabouts.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Well," I inquired at last; "and your reason for seeking me this evening?"

She hesitated, as though uncertain in what manner to place her project before me. She moved uneasily, and rising, drew forth a large despatch-box from its leathern case and placed it upon the table. I noticed that the outer case bore a count's coronet with a cipher beneath.

Having opened the box with a tiny gold master-key which hung upon her bracelet, she drew forth some official-looking papers, and then returned to her chair.

"You have already been entrusted with a secret, which you have not betrayed—the secret of that unfortunate occurrence on the evening when accident first brought us together," she commenced gravely.

"Therefo
any furthe
you will no
"I am honore
that you should en
opinion of me," I sa
ever, without a slight t
casm.

I did not forget that she ha
rescued me from my enemies i
turn for my silence. She was
a woman to act without strong mo
tives. Moreover, she had admitte
knowledge of that strange midnigh
crime at The Boltons, and was,
therefore, an accessory after the
fact.

"You are the Prince's confidential agent here, in London, and I come to you on a mission direct from His Serene Highness."

"From Bulgaria?" I inquired.

"Yes. I left Sofia a week ago," she answered. "It was at first proposed to place the matter in the hands of Guechoff, our diplomatic representative at the Court of St. James's, but, on consideration, His Serene Highness, knowing that with the present state of high feeling in the Sobranje a single hint leaking out might prove disastrous to the dynasty, and perhaps to the nation, resolved to place the matter unreservedly in my hands. The Prince did me the honor of referring in terms of praise to my previous dealings with you, and instructed me to lose no time in seeing you and invoking your aid."

"In what direction?"

Was it not amazing that I should awake from my years of unconsciousness to find myself so powerful in the world of finance that reigning princes sought my assistance?

"I have here a letter from His Serene Highness;" and she handed me a note which bore the Bulgarian royal arms, and had apparently been written by the Prince's own hand. It was merely a formal note asking me to consider the secret proposals which would be placed before me by the bearer.

"Well?" I inquired, when I had read it. Explain."

"Briefly," she said, "the facts are as follows: The throne of Bulgaria, never very safe owing to the eternal bickering between St. Petersburg and the Porte, is at this moment in imminent danger. The People's Party in the Sobranje have been defeated, and the police have learnt of a projected popular uprising against His Highness in favor of a republic, the agitation being, of course, caused by paid agents of Russia. It is an open secret that Russia, at the first sign of an outbreak, would endeavor to annex the country, hence the position of the throne grows each moment more perilous. Fear of giving offence to Russia prevents orders being issued for the arrest of the secret agitators, and it seems therefore as though a revolution cannot long be delayed. It is your aid His Serene Highness seeks — your aid to negotiate a loan of half a million sterling."

"Half a million!" I ejaculated. "A large sum!" It seemed incredible that I should be a dealer in millions.

"A large sum, certainly, but you can easily obtain it," she quickly assured me. "I have all the necessary preliminaries of the securities here;" and she pointed to the pile of papers at her side.

"I take it that the money is required for the Prince's private purse?"

"No; solely for defence—to purchase arms and ammunition; to pay the army the arrears due, so as to secure their support in case of an outbreak, and to pay certain heavy sums as secret-service money. All this is imperative in order to save the country from falling into the hands of Russia. But it must be done, of course, in strictest secrecy. His Highness, as I have already explained, hesitated to entrust the matter to his recognized minister here because the spies of Russia are everywhere, and if any knowledge of his intentions leaked out it would be fatal to his plans."

"And so he trusts me!" I said, smiling.

"He does, absolutely."

"And where does His Highness think that I am to get half a million of money from at a moment's notice, pray?" I asked with a smile.

"With these in your possession there will be no difficulty," she re-

a
The
proje
railw
Saghr
Rasgra
i opera
Rustchuk."
al declarations fro
Minister of Finance,
Prince himself.

The documents were ly very ingeniously contrive to conceal the real purpose the loan. I remarked this, my companion, laughingly ghtly, said—

"Deception, to some extent, is always necessary in delicate diplomacy."

The discovery that the mysterious woman—whose name she had withheld from me—was actually a secret agent of the autonomous Principality created by the Berlin Treaty—that turbulent State mostly notable for the assassination of its Ministers—was entirely unlooked for. On the night when accident had thrown us together, and she had soothed my brow with her cool hand, I had believed her to be a young girl who had taken pity upon me in my helplessness; but the revelations she had made during that half-hour showed that there had been some firm purpose underlying it all.

She alone knew the truth of that tragic occurrence at The Boltons, and I saw that in this matter I had to deal with a very clever and ingenious woman.

I had now a double purpose in life—to discover Mabel and to elucidate the mystery of the crime. Towards that end I intended to strive, and as I sat with my glance fixed upon those mysterious grey eyes, I endeavored to form some plan of action.

"Madam," I said gravely, at last, "as you appear not to place sufficient confidence in me to tell me your name, I regret that I can place no confidence in these documents."

"My name!" she laughed. "Ah, of course; I had quite forgotten. There is no secret about it;" and from her purse she drew forth a folded, much-worn blue paper, which she handed to me.

It was an English passport, bearing the name of "Lucy Edna Grainger."

"Grainger!" I repeated. "Then you are English?"

"Yes, I am legally a British subject, because my father was English. I was, however, born abroad."

A silence fell between us. The roar of the traffic in Piccadilly came up from below; the summer night was warm, and the window stood open. At last I determined upon a bold course.

"Now that we have met," I said, "I wish to ask you one or two questions. First, I am desirous of knowing the whereabouts of Mrs. Anson and her daughter."

I was watching her narrowly, and saw her give a distinct start at my mention of the name. Next instant, however, she recovered herself, and with marvellous tact repeated—

"Anson? Anson? I have no acquaintance with any person of that name."

I smiled.

"I think it unnecessary that you should deny this, when the truth is so very plain," I observed sarcastically. "You will, perhaps, next deny that a young man was foully murdered within that house in The Boltons; that you were present, and that you are aware of the identity of those who committed the crime?"

The pallor of her cheeks showed plainly that I had recalled unwelcome memories.

"The unfortunate affair is all of the past," she said hoarsely. "Why need we discuss it?"

"In the interests of justice," I

se of
d to in-
nd Yard in
r."
ntinued.)

RISKY.

e tramp had seen a
life, he was no judge
r, otherwise he would
said what he did to Miss
Hawkins. When she said
would give him a good din-
ne would saw and split wood
gh to pay for it, he attempted
appeal to her sympathy.

"Madam," he replied sadly, "I'd glad to saw and split the wood, be glad to do anything, but I'm t physically strong. I have a eak heart, madam, and I have to ok out for it. You see, I carry y life in my hands, as it were," he said, with what was meant for a wan, pathetic smile.

"Indeed!" and Miss Hawkins gave an incredulous sniff as she glanced at the palms outstretched for aid. "I suppose that's the reason you don't wash 'em—for fear of getting drowned?"

STARTING EARLY.

Wangles was married recently, and there was a regular hail of rice, confetti, and old shoes, for good luck, as he got into the cab. Moreover, on turning round, he was struck above the eye by a friendly shoe with rather a heavy heel.

As the cab immediately drove away, no notice was taken of the accident, and, despite the large handkerchief tied by his sobbing bride over his injured optic, the blood still flowed down Wangles' face.

When they arrived at their destination, the newly-created Benedick went out to a doctor to get the bleeding stopped.

"How did you come by this, my man?"

"Well, you see, doctor—aw—I got marri-d this morning, and—" commenced Wangles, when the doctor broke in:

"What, has she started already?"

SATISFIED.

"Please, sir," piped the tiny customer, whose head scarcely reached the counter, "father wants some oak varnish."

"How much does your father want, my little man?" asked the shopman.

"Father said you was to fill this," said the little fellow, handing over a half-gallon can.

It was duly filled, and handed over.

"Father will pay you on Saturday," said the recipient casually.

And then the face of the shopman grew dark.

"We don't give credit here," he said. "Gimme back the can!"

Meekly the little lad handed back the can, which was emptied, and handed back to him with a scowl.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "Father said you'd be sure to leave enough round the sides for him to finish the job he wants to do. And I think you have, sir."

LEFT ON HIS HANDS.

A little girl of seven or eight years stood one day before a closed gate. A gentleman passed slowly. The little girl turned and said to him, "Will you please open this gate for me?"

The gentleman did so. Then he said kindly, "And why, my child, couldn't you open the gate yourself?"

"Because," said the little girl, "the paint's not dry yet. Look at your hands."

BREAKING IT GENTLY.

Foreman (at the door)—"Did yer husband hev a new suit av clo'es on this mor-rnin', Mrs. O'Malley?"

Mrs. O'Malley—"He did."

Foreman—"They're rooined entirely."

Mrs. O'Malley—"How did ut happen?"

Foreman—"He was blowed up be a charge av dinnymite."

HER SHARE.

Cousin—"So the lawyers got nearly all the estate. Did Ethel get anything?"

George—"Oh, yes! She got one of the lawyers!"

FARM

HING PIGS.

y in wallowing in the
d the most filthy holes pro-
em with conditions which ap-
to give them the greatest de-
ght, says W. R. Gilbert. Some assume that when they roll in the mud they are desirous of getting dirty. I am not so sure of this. Judging from what I have seen, the reverse seems to be the case. No pig I have ever owned has gone on enjoying having a crusty coat on any part of its body. When hampered with such they soon rub and scratch with the object of getting it off, and they find peace and relief in this. I believe they often take to the mucky mud-holes to roll and get the hardened softened. I have always noticed that a pig with a thick layer of dirt on it will roll on the slush much sooner and more often than one that is clean, and I have satisfied myself by practice that pigs that are kept clean are more contented and thrive much better than those that are always on fidgets with an irritating coat. In warm weather they will rush into the pools and streams and have a bath, but there is nothing objectionable in that. How they do enjoy a good scrub and they almost seem to take pride in avoiding dirt afterwards, but the clean skin does not suggest a return to the addition filth. When pigs are being turned out on the clean grass, I would urge that all be scrubbed before they go out. Use a liquid composed of one gallon of hot water, half a pint of parafin oil, and two ounces of soft soap, when all parasites will be killed, dirt removed and clean, sweet skin supplied. Extra feeding may cause pigs that have come to a standstill to develop more freely, but I can say a good wash whenever necessary, will move them on wonderfully. I have often admired the pigs shown at the big shows, for their skins. What a difference if they were all like No doubt much good food is given to them in such prime condition, but the finishing touch is the clean coat, and to this alone I give credit for their superiority.

STORAGE OF POTATOES.

In a community that produces many potatoes, storage houses become a necessity. Potatoes stored in an ordinary storage room lose weight rapidly and soon become shriveled and of poor quality. The underground storage combines all the qualities for keeping potatoes in the best condition.

Possibly the most important requisite is to keep down the temperature of the cellar. These cellars should be built lengthwise with the currents of air so that in the fall when the potatoes are put in, a draft through the cellar can be established at night to carry off the heat brought in with the potatoes during the day. The practice is to fill in the bins in layers of not more than one foot each day and let this layer cool down during the night. After the potatoes are all in, the ventilation is regulated so that the temperature is kept as near freezing point as possible without freezing the potatoes. This ventilation is necessary, not only to regulate the temperature, but to keep the air pure and dry. If the air becomes foul and damp, moulds will grow and dry rot or Fusarium will develop. Many potatoes are spoiled in the stores and in the store rooms of dwelling. The potatoes are stored near a furnace with more or less light. Before the sack or barrel is all used the potatoes become greened by light and are not only unwholesome, but to a certain extent, poisonous.

HOG WEIGHT AND SHRINKAGE

Hogs shrink from live to dressed weight 18 to 20 per cent., according to weight. Heavy, solid hogs shrink the least. Most packers estimate 20 per cent. shrinkage, and this is about the average. This is on a lot basis, of course. There is a further shrinkage of about 1½ per cent. in chilling. A test of a large number of hogs averaging 23.21 pounds live weight, showed a shrinkage of 18.84 per cent. from live to dressed weight. This, of course, was the hot weight and not the chilled dressed weight; also, of course, with the head on and the ham facings. The net yield of these hogs was 69.51 per cent. of the live weight, figuring sides, hams, shoulders, lard, grease and rough or market meats.

"I got a cold supper when I went home to-night, and you bet I kicked about it." "Did that do any good?" "Well my wife made it warm for me."