A Ho

OR, THE GIRL I

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Cont'd).

My words perplexed her. That she was acquainted with the Ansons I had no doubt, and I was likewise certain that she would never risk information being given to the police. More than once in the days long past I had entertained a shrewd suspicion that she herself was the actual murderer of that young unknown man. I looked at her pale face, and vaguely wondered again whether such were the truth.

The fact that she had secured my silence in return for my life as an outcome of that most ingenious conspiracy had seemed to me proof conclusive of her guilt, and now that we had met in those strange circumstances the idea became impressed upon me more forcibly than ever.

What might be her real position in the secret diplomacy of Bulgaria I knew not. It was evident that considerable confidence was reposed in her. She had come to me with a cool demand to raise a loan of half a million sterling, and it was plain from what she had explained that the money was urgently needed for the protection of the State against enemies both internal and external. My own position was unique. Had not Gedge shown me those official documents, which gave me concessions in the Principality of Bulgaria, I should have laughed this woman's curious story to scorn as a piece of impossible fiction. But I had glanced over some of those papers at Denbury, and was satisfied that I had actually had many dealings with that State during the six years of my unconscious but prosperous existence. There seemed every truth in her statement that to her had been due my success in the City in the first instance.

"And supposing you broke your promise and went to Scotland Yard?" she suggested at length, her eyes still fixed upon me. "What would you expect to find?"

"To find?" I echoed. "I should find traces of the crime within that room."

She nodded. I had expected my words to have some confusing effect upon her, nevertheless, on the contrary, she remained perfectly calm. Her self-control was extraordinary.

"And what would it profit you, pray?" she asked.

"I should at least know that I had endeavored to bring to justice those responsible for the poor fellow's death."

"It would only be an endeavor—a vain one, I assure you."

"You mean that the secret is too well concealed ever to be revealed," I observed quickly.

"Yes," she said; "you have guessed aright."

"And, in other words, you defy me to discover the truth?"

"I have not said so. The word defy is scarcely one which should be used between us, I think, considering that our interests are today mutual—just as they were on the night of the crime."

"I fail to see that," I answered. "I have no interest whatever in keeping this terrible secret hidden, for while I do so I am acting the part of accessory."

"But surely you have an interest in preserving your own life?" she urged.

"Then you imply that if I were to lay information at Scotland Yard I should be in peril of my life?" I asked, looking straight into those calm eyes that ever and anon seemed full of mystery.

"Of that I cannot speak with any degree of certainty," she responded. "I would only warn you that in this matter continued silence is by far the best."

"But you have uttered a veiled threat!" I cried. "You are aware of the whole facts, and yet refuse to impart to me the simple information of the whereabouts of Mrs. Anson. Do you think it possible in such a case that I can entertain any confidence in you, or in your extraordinary story regarding the affairs of Bulgaria and its Prince?"

"I am unable to give you any information regarding the lady you mention," she replied, with a slight frown of annoyance.

"But you are acquainted with her?"

"I may be—what then?"

"I demand to k
is"

"And in reply I
am in ignorance."

"In that case," I sai
refuse to have any furt
whatsoever with you.
first I became drawn i
by you, bound down an
years held silent by your
But, madam, I now tell you p
ly of my intentions. I mean
morrow to lay the whole facts
fore the Director of Criminal
vestigations, including this story
yours regarding the Prince and
people."

She rose slowly from her cha
perfectly calm, her dignity unr
fled. Her manner was absolute
perfect. Had she been a princess
herself she could not have treated
my sudden ebullition of anger with
greater disdain.

She gathered up the papers she had put before me, and, replacing them in the despatch-box, locked it with the golden master-key upon her bangle.

Afterwards, she turned to me and said, in a hard distinct voice—

"Then I understand that I have to inform His Serene Highness that you refuse to assist him further?"

"Tell him whatever you choose, madam," I answered, rising and taking up my hat and cane. "I shall, in future, act according to my own inclinations."

"And at your own risk!" she added, in a harsh voice, as, bowing stiffly before her, I turned towards the door.

"Yes, madam," I answered; "I accept your challenge—at my own risk."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The mellow summer twilight was fast deepening into night as I strode along Piccadilly towards the Circus, after leaving the grey-eyed woman who held the secret.

What she had revealed to me was startling, yet the one fact which caused me more apprehension than all others was the curious means by which she had discovered my whereabouts. If she had been enabled to do this, then the police would, no doubt, very soon find me and return me to my so-called "friends."

In despair I thought of Mabel. Long ago I had surrendered my whole heart to her. She had at first placed a strong and high-minded confidence in me, judging me by her own lofty spirit, but that unaccountable rupture had occurred, and she had gone from me crushed and heart-broken. In my pocket I carried her letter, and the more I thought over it the more puzzled I became. Daily, hourly, I lamented over the broken and shattered fragments of all that was fairest on earth; I had been bore at once from calm and lofty and delighted speculations into the very heart of fear and tribulations. My love for her was now ranked by myself as a fond record which I must erase for ever from my heart and brain. Once I had thought to link my destiny with hers; but, alas! I could not now marry her, nor could I reveal to her, knowing them not, the mysterious influences which had changed the whole current of my life and purposes. My secret burden was that of a heart bursting with its own unuttered grief.

The whole of the events swept past me like a torrent which hurried along in its dark and restless course all those about me towards some overwhelming catastrophe. Tormented by remorseful doubts and pursued by distraction, I felt assured that Mabel, in her unresisting tenderness, her mournful sweetness, her virgin innocence, was doomed to perish by that relentless power which hed linked her distiny with crime and contest in which she had no part but as a sufferer. It is, alas! the property of crime to extend its mischiefs over innocence, as it is of virtue to extend its blessings over many that deserve them not.

Plunged in that sea of troubles, of perplexities, of agonies, and of terrors, I reflected upon all that the woman Edna had told me. It seemed inconceivable that Bulgaria's ruler should demand assistance of me—and yet it was undoubtedly true.

tel
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ne ho-
entries,
that Mrs.
had arriv-
n, 1891, and had
the best suites of
June 5th, when they
ill and left suddenly.
d at Mabel's letter. It
June 4th. She had left
day following. I could learn
ng further.

an excited, unsettled state of mind, unable to decide how to act, I returned to London, and then, out of sheer want of something to do, I travelled down to Heaton. The old place was the same: neglected and deserted, but full of memories of days bygone. Old Baxter and his wife were both dead, and the caretakers were fresh servants whom my agent had apparently engaged. I also learnt that Parker, the faithful old woman who had tended to my wants in Essex street, had also passed away more than two years before.

I spent a dismal day wandering through the house and park, then drove back to Tewkesbury, and on the following morning returned to London. In the six years that had elapsed since my last visit to the Manor nothing had changed save, perhaps, that the grass had grown more luxuriantly over the gravelled drive, and the stone exterior was being gradually rendered grey by the lichen which in those parts overgrows everything.

The mystery of the crime, and of the singular events which had followed was an enigma which seemed utterly beyond solution.

My nerves were shattered. As the days went by an increasing desire possessed me to ascertain more of that woman who called herself Grainger, and was the confidential emissary of a reigning prince. She alone knew the truth, therefore why should I not carefully watch her movements, and endeavor to discover her intentions? From the veiled threat she had uttered, it was evident that although she did not fear any revelations that I might make, yet she regarded me as a person detrimental to her interests. As long as I had acted as her agent in negotiating loans for the Principality, she had secured for me high favor in the eyes of Prince Ferdinand. But the fact that I had gained consciousness and refused to assist her further had taken her completely by surprise.

That same evening I called at the Bath Hoel, and ascertained that "Mrs. Grainger" had left some days before. She had not, it appeared, given any address where letters might be forwarded, but a judicious tip administered to a hall-porter caused him suddenly to recollect that a couple of days before her departure she had sent a dressing-bag to a trunk-maker's a little further down Piccadilly, to be repaired. This bag had not been returned to the hotel, therefore it was quite probable, thought the hall-porter, that the trunk-maker had forwarded it to her.

"You know the people at the trunk-maker's, of course?" I said.

"Yes, sir. Many visitors here want repairs done to their boxes and bags."

"The Bath Hotel is therefore a good customer?" I remarked. "They would certainly give you her address if you asked for it."

He seemed a trifle dubious, but at my request went along to the shop, and a quarter of an hour later returned with an address.

She had not moved far, it appeared. Only to the Midland Hotel at St. Pancras.

Late that night I myself left the

(Continued.)

ON THE FARM

BETTER CREAM NEEDED.

Too much cannot be said on the question of separating and caring for cream at the cream gathering creameries. It is a string that cannot be played upon too often in the present condition of the butter business. Cleanliness is at the root of the matter. Keep the cows clean and in clean places. Let the milker be clean, his clothes as well as his hands. Clean the udder before beginning to milk, and milk with dry clean hands.

More patrons are weak in separator management and handling the cream than anything else. One of the creamery instructors reported last year that he found separators sitting in every conceivable place from the kitchen to the hog pen. A clean separator is one of the most valuable adjuncts of the dairy. But it cannot keep bad flavors and dirt out of the milk or cream unless properly used. It should be thoroughly cleaned after each separation and kept clean. It should be operated in a place where everything is clean and the atmosphere pure. When the milk is run through the separator it is at the temperature at which it is taken from the cow, or nearly so. In other words, it is just in a condition to absorb bad flavors. In the separating process the milk is exposed to the surrounding air. It passes through the separator in a fine stream, every particle coming in touch with the separator. If the latter is not clean and free from taint, the milk, or rather the cream, is sure to be affected.

There is too much thin, sour cream being supplied. This is due to improper separating. A richer cream should be secured. It will keep better; there will be a smaller amount to keep cool, less load for the driver, and less bulk for the butter maker to handle. The better quality of cream will insure better butter being made and a better financial return to the patrons.

Many creamery patrons lack proper cooling facilities. Some patrons seem to think that the buying of a cream separator will enable them to do without ice. But ice is just as necessary for cooling the cream as it was for cooling the milk to facilitate the raising of the cream before the separator was bought. Ice in plenty should be supplied for cooling the cream as soon as separated.

ADVANTAGES OF POULTRY KEEPING.

The poultry keeper above all other business men has the advantage of having for sale a product which is saleable every day in the year in any part of the country. There is no town so small, no village so remote that poultry and eggs are not in demand at all times, and in many instances the more remote the town the better the prices. The poultry keeper has also the advantage of being able to foretell within a narrow range what price he will obtain for his produce. He knows that at certain times he will be able to get high prices and at other times prices are very likely to fall. He knows that year after year certain price curves will be found in the market quotations and these will not vary widely in any series of years. The price of beef, mutton, pork, wool, cotton, farm produce of any kind, is likely to swing through a wide arc in consecutive years, prices being made on demand or according to the quality produced. With the products of the poultry yard it is different. Prices go up and down almost as regularly as if they had been fixed to remain permanent, and the poultry keeper need not worry about supply and demand. He

to secure
ber of eggs from
en. It is characteris-
business of producing
at a shortage in the summer
an overplus in the winter does
not affect prices to any great degree. This is because the law of average applies. If one poultryman's hens lay well in winter the increased supply is not large enough to lower prices, while if one flock ceases to produce in early summer other flocks go right on producing the usual summer output. This gives the individual poultryman an opportunity to conduct his business so as to get the best results by producing the largest number of eggs at a time when the prices are highest. In the poultry keeping as in any other business it is ability to see ahead which makes for success.

THE FIRST MILK.

Some recent English investigations, carried out on behalf of some of the County and Borough Councils in Yorkshire, demonstrated that the first milk drawn from each cow contained an enormously greater number of germs than either the mid-milk or the strippings. The first or fore milk represented the first 25 cubic centimeters drawn from the teat, the mid-milk being taken when the milking was half accomplished.

The numbers were quite variable, but the results largely confirmed those of other investigators, one of whom found 97,000 bacteria in the first milk, as compared with about 9,000 in the mid-milk, and 500 in the strippings. It seems that the bacteria clustered in colonies about the end of the teat are largely washed away by the first few streams of milk drawn from the quarter. The practical lesson is, of course, to reject the first two or three streams of milk from each teat, not even allowing it to come in contact with the inside of the pail. As the foremilk is very thin and watery, practically no butter-fat is lost, while the bacterial content of the mess of milk will be very much reduced, and its wholesomeness and keeping qualities accordingly improved.

STRONGER THAN RULES.

Women Prisoners in Italy Found Means of "Making Up."

Prison rules in Italy are most strict, especially so far as the dress of the prisoners is concerned. Powder, scent, cosmetics, and all other handmaids of vanity are forbidden, but coquetry is stronger than rules.

Several prisoners found the means of powdering their faces. They patiently licked the walls of their cells, masticated the whitewash and thus obtained a kind of white paste, with which they proudly coated their faces.

One woman was found with her cheeks covered with rouge like a ballet girl. No one could realize how she had managed it. Her cell was thoroughly but vainly searched.

Eventually the mystery was solved. In the nightgowns used by the prisoners there are a few red threads. This woman had patiently pulled out these threads one by one, had soaked them in water, and in this original way had made some rouge for her private use.

BRITAIN'S LARGEST STATION.

Although London is the largest city in the world, there are certain respects in which it is beaten. One of these is railway-stations. Liverpool Street, London's largest station, is smaller by about half an acre than Waverley Station, Edinburgh, which covers twenty-three acres in all. Waverley Station—which is the largest in the world—contains two main platforms, each 560 yards long; seventeen docks, of an average length of 180 yards each; and a cab-yard 2,200 square yards in area. Within the boundaries of the station are 18,850 yards of permanent way. The station staff comprises some 400 men. There are five signal-cabins, and in the telegraph department forty operators handle some 4,000 messages daily.

GENERALLY THUS.

Jack—"I attended a piano recital last night."

Tom—"What is a piano recital?"

Jack—"It's a so-called entertainment where one person pounds a piano and all the others present talk."

OPTIMISTIC.

"Is he optimistic?"

"Optimistic? Why man, he talks like a mine prospector."