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'Fresh from the gardens'

# The Affair at Flower Acres

by CAROLYN WELLS

BEGIN HERE TODAY

The body of Douglas Raynor is found in the early evening on the floor of the sun room at Flower Acres, his Long Island home. Standing over the dead man, pistol in hand, is Malcolm Finley, former sweetheart of Raynor's wife, Nancy. Eva Turner, Raynor's nurse, stands by the door, with her hand still on the light switch. In a moment Nancy appears, white-faced and terrified. Orville Kent, Nancy's brother, comes in from the south side of the room, and then Ezra Goddard, friend of Finley, enters upon the scene. "I didn't do it," Finley protests; "I don't think I did." "Then Mrs. Raynor did it," accuses Miss Turner; "before I could get the light on I saw you both—" Now Goddard goes toward the stricken man. "Perhaps Raynor isn't dead," he says.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Yes, he's dead," Goddard said, after a brief examination. "I think the women should go to their rooms—or, at least, away from here."

But none of the women would do this, and, as Miss Mattie showed signs of faintness, Eva Turner hastened away and returned with restoratives.

"Hatfield," Ezra Goddard said, giving his orders curtly, "call the family doctor—you know his number?"

"Oh, yes, sir," and the butler disappeared.

"Did you shoot Raynor, Malcolm?" was the next question.

"No," said Finley, but his face was so drawn with shock and sorrow that his word carried no clear conviction.

"Then what are you doing with that pistol?"

"I—I picked it up—as I came in—Look here, Goddard, it's none of your business!"

"Oh, yes, it is—I'm making it my business. Have you no more to say?"

"No more," said Malcolm Finley.

"I have," said the nurse. "It was either Mr. Finley or Mrs. Raynor who fired that shot!"

CHAPTER IV.

DETECTIVE DOBBINS

If Ezra Goddard had followed the sea, he would have been the sort of sailor who is dubbed able seaman. If he had chosen the ministry as a career, he would have been known as an eminent divine. Had he pitched on the legal profession, he would have been spoken of as a noted lawyer. Or had he been an author, he would most certainly have attained the rank of celebrated novelist.

Moreover, if he had bent his talents and energies to the science of sleuthing, he would have risen rapidly to the height of Transcendent Detective, and would have become famous.

But detective he was not, for though possessed of the necessary perspicacity, he had had no training or experience, and knew little or nothing of finger-print work or of third-degree practice.

So it was really owing more to his inherent generalship than to his deductive ability that he stepped forward and assumed control of the entire situation.

His efficiency in emergency was well nigh 100 per cent., and within fifteen minutes of the discovery of Douglas Raynor's death, Goddard had sent word to the family physician, the county medical examiner and the local police. And within an hour they had all arrived.

Doctor Saxton came first. Though he was the family physician, he had rarely been called to Flower Acres, for there had been little illness in the household. When Douglas Raynor began to get faddy about his diet, he sought advice from various well advertised books, and, later, had decided on the employment of a resident dietitian. Miss Turner was by no means the first of these, indeed, she was merely the present incumbent, and was already slated for dismissal by her patient.

"There are strange conditions here—most peculiar conditions."

But, being present, and being a graduate nurse, Doctor Saxton immediately spoke to her professionally, and seemed to rely on her assistance.

She came to him tremblingly, and with an obvious aversion to touching or even looking at the dead body of her late patient.

"Shot through the heart," the doctor said, after a brief investigation. "Who did it?"

To this direct question there was no answer. Miss Turner compressed her lips into a straight, unspeaking line, while the others present, who were huddled round the sides of the sun room, gave only ghastly, wondering looks at the doctor.

Held by some fascination of horror, they had all remained in the presence of the dead. Goddard had advised it, and the rest had inertly obeyed.

Nancy, her hand clasped in her brother's, was half reclining in a long chair, while Miss Mattie sat bolt upright, eagerly watching everything that transpired.

Malcolm Finley sat with folded arms and a calm, inscrutable face, his gray eyes moving slowly from the dead victim of the tragedy to the living wife and back again.

From his scrutiny of the livid face and contorted muscles of Raynor Doctor Saxton at last lifted a puzzled countenance to the group of anxious spectators.

"There are strange conditions here," he said, "most peculiar, inexplicable conditions. Had Douglas Raynor any enemies?"

He glanced around the room, and, as no one else spoke, Ezra Doddard said:

"In view of the fact that someone shot and killed him, I think we may logically assume that he had."

The tinge of irony was slight, but quite enough to annoy the doctor.

"Not at all, sir. It is perfectly possible that the shooting might have been an accident, or—a suicide."

"Oh, was it? Do you think that?" Nan spoke rapidly, in jerky accents, as if surprised but not displeased at this suggestion.

"I can't say yet, Mrs. Raynor. On the face of it, it looks as if he had been shot down by the hand of another, but until after a more detailed examination, I prefer not to give a definite opinion. And for that, I want to await the arrival of the medical examiner. When he comes, I must ask that we be left by ourselves, except that I wish Miss Turner to remain with us in her professional capacity."

"I'd like to say a word—" began Malcolm Finley, but Goddard stopped him peremptorily.

"Not a word, Mal. Surely you know better. This is not the time or place for any revelation, theory or suspicion. In fact, I ask all of you to say nothing definite or vital until the examiner and the detectives get here."

"I shall say what I choose," announced Nan, "and I say—"

"My dear Mrs Raynor," Goddard spoke quietly, but looked at her with a steady gaze, "just reflect a moment on the fact that quite aside from yourself, what you would say might affect others in a way for which you would be sorry."

"What do you mean?" she said.

"It doesn't matter what I mean, but it might matter a great deal what you say, so I ask you, I beg of you, to say nothing."

His insistence won the day, and Nan said no more, except now and then in a whisper to Orry.

And so, when Doctor Fraser, the examiner, came, everybody was turned out of the room except Nurse Turner.

The others filed into the large living room and seated themselves. Malcolm Finley almost gave way to his strong desire to sit by the side of Nancy, but compelled himself to conquer it, and crossed the room to sit beside Miss Mattie.

She, however, was so pointedly cold and distant of manner, that Finley turned aside and began talking to Goddard.

"I hope a fairly decent detective will be sent," he said; "for this is not a case to be bungled."

"It is not, indeed," Goddard assented; "I only hope the doctors can prove it a suicide."

"Why?" cried Nan. "Suicide is the deed of a coward—and Douglas was never that!"

"No, he was not," Goddard said; "yet I wish it might have been—for a murder mystery is a long, hard road to travel."

"It's murder—but it's no mystery."

These words were spoken by Miss Mattie. She looked straight at Nan, and though she said no more definite word, it was easily seen that already she accused Nancy Raynor of the death of her husband.

"But Nancy didn't shoot him," the spinster added, and Nan looked up quickly, to see the stern old face as accusing as ever, and the sharp old eyes glaring at her.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, wearily, and leaning back in her chair she closed her eyes, and her brother watched her affectionately.

"I wish Nan would go to her room," Orville Kent said; "she can be of no use tonight, and when the policemen come it will drive her frantic."

"She ought to be driven frantic," Miss Mattie's cold voice declared. "Of course she can't go to her room, Orville; she must be questioned with the rest of us."

Notwithstanding the awfulness of the occasion, it was quite clear that Miss Mattie looked forward to the questioning not without relish.

At last, to her satisfaction, the police arrived. The others, too, felt a certain sense of relief.

(To be continued.)

George: "Do you believe in clubs for women?" Earl: "Yes, if kindness fails."

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Marks

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1 2. When was the "Oldest Bond House in Canada" established?
2 3. What is the name of the first and largest office building a stranger would notice upon arriving at the new Union Station in Toronto?
1 4. Has every investor who purchased bonds recommended and sold by G. A. Stimson & Co., Limited during the past 46 years received interest, and principal when due?
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2 6. Where is the Head Office of the "Oldest Bond House in Canada"?
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2 9. In 20 years how much *more* would you receive from an investment of $1,000 at 6% interest, compounded at the end of each year than you would receive from the same amount invested at 3% interest, compounded at the end of each year?
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RULES OF CONTEST

1. Contest closes May 15th, 1929. Entries bearing a later postmark will be rejected.
2. Use plain white paper, size 8" x 11", if possible. Use one side only. Write the essay on a separate sheet of paper and fasten both sheets together.
3. Contestant's name, address, county, age, school, teacher's name should be plainly written in lower right hand corner of the first page.
4. A total of 100 marks is possible to obtain. Marks will be credited as indicated opposite question.
5. All entries must be mailed and addressed "Educational Contest", c/o G. A. Stimson & Co., Limited, Commerce & Transportation Bldg., Bay and Front Streets, Toronto. The envelope must have your county written plainly on the back. This is important.
6. No correspondence will be entered into on this subject, and no material entered in the contest will be returned.
7. It is agreed that the prize winning essays become the property of G. A. Stimson & Co., Limited.
8. G. A. Stimson & Co., Limited, reserve the right to enquire from the teacher, parent or guardian of the contestant as to whether the rules of the contest have been complied with.
9. The decision of three independent judges selected by the directors of G. A. Stimson & Co., Limited must be considered final.
10. Contestant shall submit one entry only.

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