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'Fresh from the gardens'

# The Affair at Flower Acres

by CAROLYN WELLS

BEGIN HERE TODAY.

Douglas Raynor is found shot through the heart in the early evening on the floor of the sun room of 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 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; Miss Mattie Raynor's sister, and others, enter upon the scene. Detective Dobbins heads the police investigation. An autopsy reveals that Raynor also was being systematically poisoned with arsenic. Lionel Raynor, son of Douglas Raynor by first marriage, comes to claim his father's estate. Finley and Orville Kent are talking when Goddard and Detective Dobbins approach them. "The one most benefitted by the death of the victim is Mrs. Raynor," says Dobbins.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

"She's not benefitted at all," said Orry, coolly. "She's practically cut off—"

"She didn't know that until after the deed was done," returned Dobbins, "and I don't mean financially only Mrs. Raynor was exceedingly unhappy with her husband, she had tried for some time to take his life by administering a slow, cumulative poison. Not succeeding, and urged on by the reappearance of her former suitor, which, I admit, made the attitude of her husband harder to bear, Mrs. Raynor became desperate and ended her bondage, for it was a bondage, by shooting her tyrant."

"But you accuse me of the shooting," said Finley. "Only my fingerprints were found on the revolver, I'm told."

"That was a clever stunt of yours, Mr. Finley," and the detective looked at him with a sort of grudging admiration. "I believe you picked up that pistol, just as you said you did—and, I believe that you had seen who dropped it—who fired it, as well—and, to save her you were quick-witted enough to whip out your handkerchief and polished off all finger-marks except your own. It was an ingenious dodge, and it worked—in that it eliminated the prints of Mrs. Raynor's fingers. But you can't get ahead of me, Mr. Finley—I'm onto your little games."

The astounded, even crestfallen look which Malcolm Finley was not quite quick enough to hide, seemed to corroborate the opinions of the detective.

"Cut it out, Dobbins," said Orille Kent, sternly; "perhaps you have some reason to suspect my sister of giving tablets of some sort to Mr. Raynor, but you have no evidence to warrant such a suspicion as you are now suggesting! My sister was out on the west terrace at the time that shot was fired—"

"Now, now, Mr. Kent, how do you know that? You, yourself, were down on the bridge a good three hundred yards away and you know nothing of the situation except by hearsay—"

"Well, there's no truth in the statement that my sister shot—"

"Oh, shut up, Kent," said Ezra Goddard, impatiently. "We know your love and loyalty for your sister prompts all this defence of her, but it doesn't get us anywhere."

"Well, we're going to get somewhere," declared Dobbins, "and mighty quick, too. I'll take up the poisoning business first. We have everything to prove that—except Mrs. Raynor's own confession—which we can hardly expect."

"What's your proof?" demanded Kent.

"We have found four different people who saw Mrs. Raynor furtively slip something into her husband's tea or coffee cups, we have found a book on poisons concealed in her bookcase, and we have found tablets hidden in a vase in her bedroom which, when analyzed, were found to be arsenic. Add to this the symptoms of arsenical poisoning observed in Mr. Raynor for some time before he died, and state if you can, any flaw in my reasoning from these facts that Mrs. Raynor poisoned her husband."

"Granting all that," Malcolm Finley said, "you've no real case against Mrs. Raynor. Douglas Raynor was not killed by poison, he was shot; and your connection of Mrs. Raynor with that shooting is a figment of your imagination. I was on the spot within a minute after the shot was fired—I know Mrs. Raynor was out on the west terrace—I will swear—"

"Save your perjury until you are called on for it, Mr. Finley," and Dobbins looked at him gravely.

"I haven't perjured myself yet—save your advice until I do. But here's another thing, Mr. Dobbins. All you say regarding Mrs. Raynor might apply equally to somebody else. As to the shooting, it would be just as logical to suspect Miss Turner, say, for she was nearer the spot where Mr. Raynor fell than his wife was. You say I wiped fingerprints from that weapon. May they not have been those of the nurse?"

"She had no motive—Mrs. Raynor had."

"Motive is a good deal, but it isn't everything," Finley persisted. "Again, as to the tablets. Suppose Mrs. Raynor was giving her husband simple tablets—soda or something—and suppose some one else, say a disgruntled servant, was administering the poison. Then wouldn't the most likely thing be for the poisoner to 'plant' the poison in a vase in Mrs. Raynor's room—"

"Look here, Mr. Finley, you're romancing altogether too much. I haven't time for such balderdash. If you, or anybody else, has any facts to communicate to me, go ahead, but otherwise, I must go on with my proceedings against Mrs. Raynor. If she is really innocent, it must come out—if she is guilty—it must be shown. Justice must be done."

In the meantime, Nan Raynor, at her wits' end as to what course to pursue, was walking in the Italian garden. As she paced the flower-bordered walks, she marveled at the desolate position in which she found herself.

Her brother loved her—but after all, Orry seemed to her more like a child, than a source of help or strength. Malcolm Finley loved her—but just now he was the last one to apply to.

Miss Raynor was a weather vane. Now she seemed fond of Nan, and resented her suspicions of her, and the next minute she would be voicing the same suspicions herself.

As Nan walked along, her hands clasped behind her, her eyes cast down, she was joined by Grimshaw Gannon.

She had never liked the old man, but at her husband's especial command, she had always been courteous to him. She had never understood the link that bound these two illy assorted natures, but she couldn't help seeing there was one. For, occasionally, Gannon would come up to the house and be closeted an hour or so with Raynor, after which episode Raynor would be unusually harsh to Nan. By this she knew that the relations between the two men were not amicable; for it was always after Raynor had had an unpleasant interview with somebody else, that he vented his irritability on his wife.

And so, in accordance with her usual habit, Nan nodded a greeting to Gannon and said a pleasant good morning.

"You know, Mrs. Raynor,' he began, abruptly, "I know a lot about your husband."

"I suppose so, Mr. Gannon."

"He was a hard man, ma'am, a very hard man."

Nan's big, mournful eyes lifted for a moment to the rugged face of the man beside her.

"If you have anything to tell me, Mr. Gannon, please do so. If not, I prefer not to have my solitude intruded on."

'Lay off the hoity-toity language, ma'am, I'm plain-spoken myself, and I've a plain word to say."

"Say it, then, please," Nan said, wearily.

"Well, it's just this. Young Raynor has come here to make trouble for you, ma'am."

"Has he?"

"Yes, he has, and I know it. You know he's going to take all his father's property, and you don't get any. See?"

"What do you know about that will, Mr. Gannon?" Nan turned suddenly and fired the question at him so quickly that he was decidedly taken aback.

"Me? Me?—" he stammered. "Why I don't know nothing, ma'am."

"You wouldn't be flustered if you had a clear conscience! Now, what do you know about that will—that you witnessed—and that you said you didn't witness? I am sure you know something—"

"What's it worth to you, ma'am, for me to tell you what I know?"

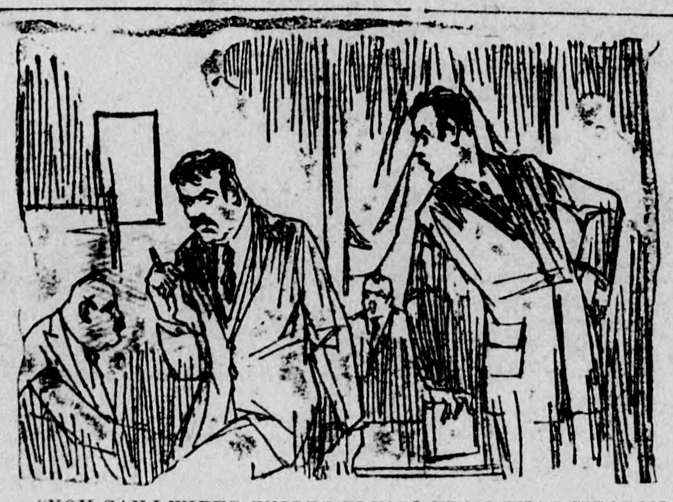
"It isn't worth one dollar—in money—if that is your meaning—but I can tell you, it will be worth all your peace of mind for you to tell me about that will."

"Peace of mind—now, I dunno, ma'am—that's a large order, peace of mind. Does any of us have that, I wonder."

"You'll have none from now on, unless you tell the truth.'

"Oh, I haven't any truth to tell that I haven't told. I was just sounding you—just trying you out."

(To be continued.)



"YOU SAY I WIPED FINGER PRINTS FROM THAT WEAPON. MAY THEY NOT HAVE BEEN THOSE OF THE NURSE?"

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## The Color Bar

Le Devoir (Ind.): In the days when Theodore Roosevelt was at the White House in Washington, he provoked a regular campaign against himself because he had officially received at the presidential residence a negro well-known to the enlightened world of the day, Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute, founded to spread technical instruction among the millions of coloured people of the United States. Now, in the Southern States, there is an attempt to start a new campaign of the same kind against the latest occupant of the White House. Mrs. Hoover, in her capacity as wife of the President, has received the wife of a black deputy from Illinois, elected to the American Congress some months ago, who is living in Washington during the session. The deputies of the State of Florida have convented in their Legislature, and officially censured Mrs. Hoover—as if the wife of the President had not the right to receive coloured persons at the White House and as if an American of the black race were not a citizen of the Republic. The only result of the incident will be to show the narrow outlook of some of the people in the South and the good sense of the Hoover family.

Minard's Liniment for Neuralgia.

## Town Planning

La Presse (Ind.): (Towns and cities in England and Wales, most of them having a population of less than 20,000, have commenced town planning programs affecting an area of over three million acres.) Are we in Canada going to show less sense than this, where we have the advantage over the world of working with what is practically new ground, in vast stretches of country with a relatively small population. In Montreal, several mistakes have already been made, which will not be easily corrected. And yet, if we are ready to make the effort, we can still make not merely a good job of it, but a beautiful one as well. For we ought not to forget, and Mr. Blucher, secretary of the City Planning Commission of Detroit, emphasized this at the Winnipeg Congress, it is not enough for a city to acquire territory and importance, it must aim to grow in beauty, so as to reconcile its commercial interests with the interests of its fame abroad.

## Freedom of the Seas

Quebec Evenement (Cons.): Naval Disarmament may be only a vain hope and the conference set for July in the United States, to which Canada will be invited, will not prevent our powerful neighbours from realizing their dream of possessing a great fleet. But in consecrating the principle that the seas ought to be free for commerce the British and American Governments will have done a great piece of work for the peace of the world.

## Tolerance and Fanaticism

Quebec Action Catholique (Ind.): The East has become accustomed—as the West will also become in its turn—to consider the French-Canadian Catholics as an integral and necessary part of the Canadian nation, as a reality and a beneficial reality. There is no point, therefore, in making too much commotion over what has nappened in Saskatchewan.

Nephew of Late Czar Becomes Taxi Driver.—Head-line. About the only profession in which czarism still exists.—Arkansas Gazette.

Minard's Liniment for Rheumatism.

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