THE TANGLED WEB

By Ethel Watts-Mumford Grant
Author of "Dupes," "Whitewash," Etc.

CHAPTER X.

Wendham crossed the room quickly, intercepting a passing servant. "Ask if I may see Mrs. Gaynor." He turned, addressing himself to Mrs. Evelyn. "Who is Mrs. Gaynor's physician?" he asked. "I consider her case critical. If you would ask her, we might send for him—physicians' etiquette, you know."

Mrs. Evelyn opened wide blue eyes. "Dear me! don't you know that Nellie thinks she is all sorts of a doctor herself? She never calls anyone in. No, indeed! She prescribes a little strychnine if she doesn't eat, and a little chloral if she doesn't sleep--and there you are."

"And there you're likely to be not!" exclaimed Alice. "You don't mean to say—!" Dr. Wendham was gone. "I don't wonder he was upset," continued Alice. "I'm glad you tipped him off."

Mrs. Evelyn took up the paper. "I suppose you heard, Alice, what they found out about John?" She had recovered her tone of aloofness.

"No," said Alice, "I didn't."

"It's too bad," the hostess remarked. "I do hate to lose a housekeeper."

Alice rose with a bound. "What, has John stolen, Mrs. Creeks? John's a hero!"

"No," answered Mrs. Evelyn with complete literalness; "no, he didn't do that. But she didn't investigate his references properly. It seems that the man has been in jail and had forged letters; recommendations from people traveling on the Trans-Siberian roads or something, and somebody who had been Consul somewhere. Creeks liked the tone and the stationery, and took a chance. I wish Mrs. Lawdon would go away," she continued. "It annoys me to see her around. She examines me as if she expected me to appear in her lost diamonds—little yellow cat!"

A nervous step drew their attention. Evelyn entered.

"Where's Wendham?" he inquired abruptly.

Alice nodded toward the stairs. "Gone to prescribe for Mrs. Gaynor, I fancy."

"Um!" he growled impatiently. "I want to see him. Confound this business!" he broke out; "it's got more turns to it than a—the Briarcliff course!"

"Yes," said his wife, going to him paper in hand. "Have you seen this?"

"That and a dozen more," he snapped. "I'm sick of the sight of the whole outfit. And as for the Lawdons—that woman's a skirling harpy!"

Alice jumped. "Skirling harpy! Thanks, dear old man, one thousand times! Banzai! I couldn't think what I wanted to say; but you have it—'skirling harpy!' Far be it from me to engage in a tilt of words with one so gifted—oh! 'skirling harpy'!"

"If you're through with that," exclaimed Evelyn with unwonted harshness, "run up to Nellie's room and ask Wendham to join me as soon as he can."

"No sooner said than done," called Alice as she disappeared. A moment later she returned, followed by the physician.

"Cass," he said quickly before that gentleman could open his mouth, "send some one out for this—and this, immediately." He signed the slips with his fountain pen. "I find her condition most unsatisfactory," he added; "there is every symptom of brain fever. Now, Mrs. Evelyn, with your permission, I will telephone for a nurse."

"Is Nellie so very ill?" asked Evelyn, startled from his own concerns.

"Very, I'm afraid."

A very silent and troubled group watched him hurrying down the corridor. Mrs. Evelyn was the first to break their tangled thoughts.

"There, now. That Lawdon woman has made Nellie ill. My dear, I'll never ask anyone to oblige anyone in order to be considerate of anyone again. It's perfectly ridiculous! Alice, let's go upstairs and see if Adele needs help, or if we can arrange matters more comfortably."

The two ladies withdrew, leaving Evelyn alone in the cheerful morning room. He paced the floor nervously. His brow was knitted, his hands clenched. Life had become far too strenuous to suit his placid nature.

A moment later Wendham entered.

"She's coming—the nurse, I mean. Old man, it's serious, and I want your permission to take charge."

"You have it," said Evelyn promptly. "What you say goes."

"Mrs. Gaynor must not see anyone except the nurse, her maid, and myself under any circumstances."

"Oh," said Evelyn, "and Polly and Alice have just gone to her."

Wendham made a gesture of impatience. "She's sleeping—they'll have sense enough not to wake her. Now, you wanted me. Is there any further trouble?"

Evelyn's face was puzzled. "I don't know what you'd call it. I've just had an interview with Dawson."

"They've caught him?"

"No," said Evelyn; "he came back and gave himself up to me. No one else knows he's here, except the gardener's wife, who's a sort of cousin of his. She came this morning and told me that some one wished to speak with me privately at the cottage. Of course, I thought of the detectives, and went. He was there. You could have floored me with a straw. The upshot of the whole matter is this. The fellow says he funked and ran away because he was sure his past would find him out and he'd be taken on circumstantial evidence. Swears he had nothing whatever to do with the robbery, and sticks to it that he did see Adele near the Lawdons' door. He says he was tempted to hold her up and make her divide the spoils, but when he saw her stand it down he got frightened and ran for it. He owns he's been a scamp, but swears he forged those recommendations only in order to get a new start, and with every intention of keeping straight once he was established in the way of making his living—and, Wendham, I believe him. I can't help it. Now, I don't know where we are. The man has thrown himself on my mercy. There's the circumstantial evidence, and that Lawdon woman hot for blood; but on the other hand, there's Nellie ill, and she's taken the accusation against Adele to heart—so—well—I'll be hanged, Boyd, if I know what move I ought to make."

Wendham thought quickly. With the clew of the valet's disappearance removed, the trail led back again to Adele—and then—he shuddered. At any rate he must have full knowledge in order to protect the woman he loved from danger direct or indirect. "See here," he spoke sharply, "I've an idea I can get the truth out of Adele if anyone can. As a doctor I've had a varied experience. Now, before you tell anybody about Dawson, before you make any move at all, let me have an interview with her alone, there in your private office. I'll do it now, and you keep watch for me, for I positively must not be interrupted. Is it a go?"

Evelyn almost smiled, so relieved was he that anyone would assume the responsibility of action.

"Go on, Boyd—you're a brick. I'm—I'm everlastingly obliged to you!"

"I'll bring her here," said Wendham; "and if you'll have the kindness to stay in the drawing-room, you can see that no one comes in. I'll go for her."

Evelyn settled himself in an easy chair in the drawing-room, whence he could see the entrance to the gun room, the main staircase and hall, and the farther entrance to the brakfast room. The house was as quiet as if deserted.

CHAPTER XI.

Wendham went directly to Mrs. Gaynor's suite and knocked gently. He found his patient resting with feverish heaviness. By her side sat Adele, her faithful eyes fixed with solicitous adoration upon the sleeper's face.

"Adele," said Wendham softly, "I have some instructions to give you. I must explain the use of some apparatus. Come downstairs."

Mrs. Gaynor stirred at the sound of his voice, seemed on the point of waking, but settled once more among the pillows. The physician signed to the servant.

"Tell the maid, whichever one cares for this floor, to be on hand in case Mrs. Gaynor needs her." Adele rang the corridor bell, and a moment later the maid approached. "Wait here, near the door," Wendham ordered. "Mrs. Gaynor is resting now, but she might wake and need attention. I must give this girl some special instructions."

He conducted his charge rapidly across the gun room to the quiet of Evelyn's private office. In spite of his will his heart beat heavily and his throat contracted in fear of what revelations might come.

Without effort he calmed himself. "Sit here," he said, indicating the end of the divan. The light poured through the uncurtained window. The woman's face was calm and attentive. "You realize, I suppose," he began gently, "that your mistress is very ill?"

"I was afraid so," she answered.

"I wish to be certain," he continued, drawing his chair close to the girl, "that you are strong enough to take charge of the case, until we bring in a trained nurse. You suffer from neuralgia, do you not?" He passed his hands gently over her forehead and face. "Let me see your eyes." She turned to him. His fine hands wove a slow pattern of gestures before her. "You are in pain now?"

"Yes," she nodded, a wrinkle forming between her level brows.

"In great pain. If you sleep now, you will be rested and able to take care of your mistress. Will you sleep now—sleep—sleep." His voice became insistent and soothing.

She nodded, sighed heavily, and succumbed slowly.

He rose, caught her relaxed body and straightened it upon the divan. For a moment he held her pulse, then lifted the white eyelid and looked at the pupil beneath.

"You are asleep—sound asleep?" his tone was half question.

"Yes," came her voice, strangely dulled, as if far away.

"I want you to remember some things for me. Mrs. Gaynor wants me to know—she wants you to tell me because I can help her. Where did you hide the diamonds you took from Mrs. Lawdon's room?"

Without hesitation, and in the same placid, remote voice, she answered. In spite of the suspicion that had become conviction, this direct acknowledgment stunned him. In the intensity of his emotion his attention strayed from the details of the woman's confession.

"Tell me that again," he ordered. "Repeat it slowly."

Obediently, with measured utterance, she began again. "The ivy grows under the window. There is a nail in the brickwork; a wire is tied to it. I reached it from the window. The bag is red leather, like the bricks; its on the end of the wire. You can't see it from outside, and the nail and wire are like those set for the vines." Her voice trailed off in a murmur of deep sleep.

"Tell me, remember well—where did you get that bag?"

"My lady gave it to me."

"When did you take those jewels from the hat box?"

"When everyone was at dinner."

"Who told you to?"

"My lady told me to find these things that were hers—to be sure that no one saw me. A key hangs with many others on a ring beside the mirror; it is flat and has two grooves and a round hole at the top."

During the latter part of the sentence the girl's voice changed. It was as if a phonographic record had been turned on, so perfect was the reproduction of Nellie Gaynor's voice. The effect was almost terrifying, yet a strange tenderness toward the erring woman filled his heart. Even in her crime she had spared her tool the consciousness of wrongdoing. She had directed her to take her mistress's proper belongings from a place indicated. Then knowledge mocked him. An honest will cannot be blindly driven to crime, even when subservient. Yet he clung to the gentler interpretation striving to find some comfort where palliation and excuse were denied.

"Did anyone see you when you left the room?" he asked.

"Yes. I was far down the corridor. He spoke and passed me. I did not answer."

Wendham bent over her. His jaw was set with determination, his brows drawn with pain.

"Tell me, and remember carefully, have you ever taken your mistress's jewels before from other places? Think well."

"Yes," she said slowly.

"When you were stopping in Douglaston, what was it that time?"

"My lady's long string of pearls. I went back for them; my lady had forgotten them, and told me where."

"How did you get into the house?"

"I came in in veils and a long coat, like——"

A cry and report—so close and loud that the air seemed rent by the explosion.

Wendham leaped to his feet.

The doorway framed a group in tragic violence. Nellie Gaynor, gray as death, a silken garment flung over her nightdress, where quickly spread a crimson stain, was clinging gasping to the shaking arm of Evelyn, while on the floor at her feet lay a heavy 44.

"Good God!" he cried.

"Look, look!" stammered Evelyn "Is she dying?"

A flash of intelligence came to Nellie's eyes. She opened her set teeth to speak, but her utterance was choked in blood.

Suddenly Wendham straightened, the habit of the physician mastering him.

"The wound is in the neck—there's a chance." He spoke quickly and his eyes commanded Evelyn's explicit obedience.

Already cries and the rush of hurrying feet announced the arrival of the frightened household.

"It was an accident. She has brain fever, Evelyn. She is entirely out of her head. I will bring Adele." He laid Nellie in Evelyn's arms, and sprang within the den.

The unmoved sleep of the woman contrasted like the awful incongruity of a nightmare, with the scene enacted so close beside her.

"Wake up! Wake up! Adele. Wake quickly—forget our talk. Your mistress needs you. She is hurt—come!" His swift hands flew above the girl's still features. She sat up as if dazed. "Your mistress needs you—she is hurt. Go to her, then run for a bowl of water. Get me absorbent cotton."

Her mind, still receptive, seized upon his orders. Rising, she ran from the room in swift obedience.

Alice Rawlins was first upon the scene. Wendham raised to her a face of marble.

"Mrs. Gaynor has hurt herself in her delirium. Go to my room and bring me down both my emergency cases. They are on the closet shelf—quick!"

As each member of the startled household arrived, they were as instantly dispatched upon a necessary errand, while he busied himself in deft relief for the sufferer.

"What did you see?" he demanded under his breath of Evelyn—"quick! speak low."

"I heard a swish. She was running from the hall to the gun room like a wild thing. She hesitated as if not knowing where to turn. I jumped up. She ran from me—into the gun room. I was after her, about to call, when she stopped short, looked in at your door there, threw up her hands, and then snatched at that—pulled it from the rack toward her. Of course it went off. That set is always kept loaded."

"You looked up and saw her playing childishly with a revolver and called to her; she turned and it went off in her hand. Do you understand?"

"Yes," nodded Evelyn. "I understand."

"She has been out of her head for twenty-four hours—you all know."

"Yes," said Evelyn.

"Now go, explain to the confounded police and the rest. She'll live if no vital arteries are cut."

Evelyn rose as his wife and Adele came up.

Mrs. Lawdon, who was running across the polished floor, paused, and turned white.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "Can I do anything?" Already she was backing away. "Anyhow, it's Mr. Evelyn's fault. I think it's criminal to keep a stock of loaded firearms about." She clapped her handkerchief to her mouth. "Oh, how sickening! It makes me ill!" She turned and fled.

Limp and white, but more than half conscious, Nellie lay upon the divan where she had been carried. For a moment they were alone, and as Boyd bent above her, her eyes, full of agony and despair, met his. Her pale lips moved.

"You know," she whispered with painful effort. "You know—I don't want to live!"

He smoothed back the hair from her forehead with a touch infinitely protective and tender.

"I'm taking care of you—in every way—Trust me!"

(To be continued.)

Circus Lessons.

Discipline is one of the spokes in the circus system wheel, says a writer in the Cosmopolitan. In the modern circus no swearing is allowed, as women and children can hear it. Cards, dice and drink are prohibited. This is not the conception which the public holds concerning circus people, but strength and steady nerves are needed for circus feats, and dissipation of any kind, would soon leave the performers without a profession.

When a big American circus was abroad, the German Emperor came one night incognito and watched them unload the flat cars. Their system so impressed him that he had some of the officers of the German army see it and adopt some of their methods.

In landing the circus outfit the first man there is the "layer-out." He generally decides in about ten minutes where his tents are to be placed. As the building of the white city proceeds, everything seems to be confusion, a tangled mass. Men are running every way; wagons seem to be dumping their loads promiscuously; but every wagon is lettered or numbered, so is every box or trunk, and all have their proper places. This great jumble of wagons, groaning and creaking in the soft turf and men shouting and singing is all working as one great whole to an end.

But although they all work together, each man is taught to think for himself, and when a man shows ability, he is soon noticed. One instance of this was afforded by a young man who was studying medicine in the winter, and thought a season in the fresh air would harden him for his next winter's work. The only job he could get was as a canvas man. But he was able to think for himself, and promotion soon came.

The circus child is not taught by blows, but by kindness and patience, and the circus management insists that every child shall go to school in winter.

PORCUPINE DESTROYS TREES.

California Forests Suffer from the Pernicious Activity of the Animals.

Reports made to the local forest bureau from Bishop, Inyo county, indicate that the porcupine is seriously damaging the lodgepole pine forests of the eastern slope of the Sierras. Practically the entire area of the Inyo national forest has been affected to some extent. In some localities the damaged trees aggregate as high as twenty-five per cent. of the total stand. While these areas are not large, forest service authorities declare that it is evident if something is not done to curb them much of the timber in the Inyo reserve will be destroyed. The porcupine feeds to a large extent during the winter months upon the inner bark of the pine, and in order to obtain food he girdles the trees, eating the bark and eventually destroying the trees. As the animal visits several trees in a single night to satisfy his hunger the damage done by one animal is considerable.

Electricity as a Carrier.

Does an electric current, when passing through a metal conductor, cause any transportation of particles? It is well known that it does so in the liquid conductors known as electrodes; in fact, such a common operation as electroplating depends entirely upon this action. To test the matter a recent experimenter passed an electric current continously for a whole year through a conductor composed partly of copper and partly of aluminum, the sections being pressed firmly together. At the end of the year they were taken apart and examined, but not the slightest trace of either metal was found in the other.

WHAT TO WEAR AND HOW TO WEAR IT

Special Correspondent of This Paper Writes Entertainingly to Women.

LATEST FROM THE METROPOLIS

Three Modes of the Latest Designs—Blue Cloth With Striped Silk Gown Delightful for Semi-formal Wear—A Striped Zephyr and the Latest Tailored Coat.

Evening bodice have a charm all their own and if the draperies on these models are skilfully managed, they can be given an air of distinction without employing any but the simplest trimmings.

The spotted silk mull dancing frock shown here owes its beauty entirely to the bodice, for the skirt is as simple and plain as a school-girl's frock, being mounted over a silk lining without any other embellishment.

The waistline is raised to Empire height and finished with a plain fold of satin, while the bodice is cut with a very deep square neck, with large tucks of chiffon folded within its confines to form the vest effect. To bind the neck narrow hand embroidered silver braid is used, strips of this trimming extending below the girdle and over the hips, after which they are quickly terminated.

The sleeves are rather unusual, being very wide and flowing, suggesting the full, graceful Greek lines. They are slashed all the way up to the shoulder seam and outlined with the braid.

GRACEFUL WAY TO DRAPE A BODICE.

Evening coiffures are very elaborate, in striking contrast to their simple trimmings. Puffs and curls are still great favorites and coiffure ornaments used with them are just sufficiently ornate to do full justice to the beauty of the coiffure itself.

The prophecy for the season regarding sleeves is that street styles and many house effects are to be full length, with or without quantities of trimming, as the occasion requires.

A striking model occupies the center of the picture, being of soft, thin material, finely braided and trimmed with tucks. It reaches all the way to the wrist, where there is a finishing ruche of finely plaited tulle.

For indoor wear gowns show a few clever short sleeves and draperies. For a dinner gown the model in the upper left hand corner is

SLEEVES AND SHOULDER DRAPERIES.

dainty, the fulled tucks being formed of chiffon or very soft goods under a shoulder plate of embroidered silk or linen.

Many of the very best gowns have sleeves wrinkled, with a little frill on the outside of the arm. Made in net for jumpers or for component parts of waists they are the very latset expressions of the fashions.

Rough blue serge is used for this smart and serviceable costume, which foretells the beauties of the season's tailor-made for practical purposes.

The circular skirt fits perfectly about the hips, flaring at the bottom in a number of graceful folds. It is finished only with a deep hem, stitched invisibly.

THE WOMAN OF FIFTY

NEW LIFE AWAITS HER AFTER CHILDREN ARE GROWN.

She May Have Any of a Dozen Talents in Other Lines But Neither She Nor the World Be Better.

By Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

The woman of fifty, whose children have all grown up and left her, is likely to think that her work is over and her life done, but her life is, on the contrary, just beginning. She is not so taken up with being a woman now, and can realize at last her individual character. Heretofore her personality has been submerged in the great common experience of love, marriage and maternity. She may have had any one of a dozen talents in other lines, but neither she nor the world is the better for it. She may have preferred other occupations; she may have particularly disliked this one; but neither capacity, preference nor distaste made any difference. A wife and mother, she must also be a nurse and housekeeper for better or worse.

One wonders sometimes, noting the wide difference in housekeeping and in child culture, whether that "better or worse" clause was not put in on account of them. If it is "better," the family is more comfortable; if it is "worse," the family is more uncomfortable; but, whichever it is, the woman must spend all her young years at it, and personality slumbers. Is there any left when one is fifty? Is not the remainder a mere shell—a husk or a remnant of what was once a woman, all her womanhood accomplished? That's what we have always thought. We have peacefully taken it for granted that she who had so patiently obliberated herself in the interests of her family should stay obliterated on general principles for all the rest of her life.

There is no reason why the woman of fifty should stay obliterated. She has ten, twenty, thirty years still to live, and in ten years of well directed effort, free from the blunders and backsteps of youth, what may she not do? "Once disentangled from the clinging mounds of domestic habit, she finds, to her intense surprise, a fountain of youth springing up within her. She can employ the green earth as much as she ever did; more, if her soul has grow ever did; more, if her soul has grown. She can take up some trade or business if she wants money—something perhaps, along the line that has previously occupied her. She can travel if she can afford it, study if she has time and wishes to go in for some kind of public work, if that appeals to her, or she may simply "loaf" for a while and "invite her soul." And what of the family? Is nothing to be lost by the emancipation of a budding grandmother? Will John at sixty-five object to these new courses? There will be no difficulty about any of these things. To say the truth, tyrant man is not half so black as he is painted. Neither is he as rapturously content with the average wife and mother as the poets and some novelists would have us believe. There is room for a cheerful hope that the man of fifty-five will spend the rest of his days quite as comfortably with the active, happy, useful, growing woman that is in watching the gradual decadence and extinction of the woman who was.

A Successful Housekeeper.

A woman to be a successful housekeeper needs to be devoid of intensive "nerves." She must be neat and systematic, but not too neat, lest she destroy the comfort she endeavors to create.

She must be affectionate, sympathetic and patient, and fully appreciative of the worth and dignity of her sphere.

Now, if a woman cannot broil a beef steak, nor boil the coffee when it is necessary, if she cannot mend the linen, nor patch a coat; if she cannot make a bed, nor ventilate the house, nor do anything practical in the way of making a home actually a home, how can she expect to be a successful housekeeper.

She needs to educate herself in the art of domestic virtues, to make a real "Home, Sweet Home."

She should have a place for everything and keep everything in its place. Remember and put in practice the motto, "Never put off 'till to-morrow that which you can do to-day."

Thus the poorest dwelling presided over by a virtuous, thrifty, cheerful and cleanly woman, may be the abode of comfort, virtue and happiness; it may be endeared to man by many delightful associations, furnishing a sweet resting place after labor, a consolation in misfortune, a pride in prosperity and a joy at all times.

A Delicious Icing.

Put on a cup of granulated sugar with half a cup of water, let it boil without stirring until it spins a heavy thread.

Beat very stiff the white of one egg and into it pour slowly the hot sugar. Let the syrup cool a little before putting it in the egg or it will cook it. Beat steadily until the icing is cool and creamy.

Just before it is too cold to stir longer add one ounce each of candied cherries, chopped citron, candied pineapple and blanched almonds.