

THE TANGLED WEB

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

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CHAPTER XV.

Alice was on her feet at once. Crossing quickly to the den she drew from a wood box a back-numbered newspaper and from the desk a long pair of clipping shears. Returning, she sat down enthusiastically.

"Sit over there, Joe," she commanded, "and screen the view. Now, here goes! Look at this headline—'Innocent Man Executed.' Cut out the 'innocent man'—that's what happens often enough; and here in the text, 'accused.' Look! 'Innocent man accused'—that's a start. Cut out the 'plunder' from 'Plunderband'—there under that caricature—we'll want that plunder. Take the 'return' from Mme. Melba's arrival. But where will you put the stuff? You mustn't stop to bury, or anything like that; some place where you can eling it quick and not be suspected even if some one saw you—a plain sight sort of place."

"Suppose I fire it under the culvert by the motor entrance. There's water enough in the brook to cover the package, and it's too heavy to wash down, I suppose. Nobody'd look for it there unless they were told."

"Right, O!" said Alice, beginning once more to diligently search the paragraphs. "Here's 'motor' from the ads., and 'Park' from the land boom speculators. We ought to get 'entrance' from the theatrical column. There 'in,' that's easy, 'water'—that's a poser. Oh, here's somebody 'who couldn't brook delays'; that's Providence for you. Now for 'under.'"

"Look in the political news. There's always some one 'under suspicion.'"

"Joe! you're a jewel yourself. Mind you don't fall under the bridge." The scissors snapped vigorously for a moment. "Culvert," we'll never find that. 'Bridge'—the social column; some one must be giving a blowout."

"Or the dental ads.," suggested Stacy.

The shears bit sharply into the now perforated sheet. "No, I'm going to take that bridge right out of the beauty doctor's nose notice. Now we have it—look!" She spread the clipped words upon her palm. "Innocent man accused, return Plunder, Motor Park entrance, in brook under bridge." There, we have it. Now cut a 'to all whom it may concern' from the legal stripe, and a headline about 'Robbery at Evelyn Grange' from a recent paper—that for directions—do you see?—to take the recipient's eye. Wish I could think of the best eye."

Stacy picked up the remains of the papers and flung them upon the blazing logs, where they blazed for a moment and, turning to black cinders, floated upward in the current of the draught.

Alice leaned forward. "You ought to know the metal of these local people pretty well. What sort of a reputation does our hayseed sheriff wear?"

"He's a perfectly honest fool." "There's your man," cried Alice triumphantly, "and it would do my heart good to see him cull the rewards over the heads of those spavined, wall-eyed, ring-boned detectives. I hate the sight of them, and I wouldn't trust one around the corner with a plugged nickel. Can you reach him?—the sheriff, I mean." "Shouldn't wonder," he smiled. "His beat isn't a very long one. Slap those words on a piece of paper—a noncommittal piece; tear the margin from another paper. Where can you get one?"

"In there. No, don't come; stay where you are, to see if anyone comes." She darted into the den, mutilated another news sheet, and, turning up the electric reading lamp, hastily dabbed the paste brush into the jar and anointed the scrap. A moment later the words were neatly arranged, and presented a startling appearance—everything from scare type to italics. But the information conveyed was clear. Blotting and folding the slip, the somewhat vague and general address was added, and Alice, extinguishing the light, returned beaming to the gun-room fireside. "All's well that ends well," she exclaimed, "and you shall have a cocktail right now, and I'll make it myself. O joy! O joy! O joy!"

Joe Stacy's presence saved the dinner that night from positive gloom. Wendham's face was careworn; Mrs. Lawdon, who appeared in a "creation" befitting an embassy ball, insisted, in spite of her husband's efforts to switch the subject, upon discussing the robbery and the latest detective reports—they were encouraging. Dawson had been traded to Newark, and an arrest was expected at any moment. Alice smiled. Always handsome in

her keen, slim-limbed, boyish way, she developed real beauty under the influence of Stacy's presence and the excitement of their venture. Evelyn watched them benignly.

"Nice chap, Joe Stacy. Pity—well, why not after all? Alice's tastes, exclusive of horses, are inexpensive, and besides, she has her own little income. Suppose the boy's too proud; must fix that somehow." For the first time in many dreary days a gleam of pleasure pierced Evelyn's thoughts. "You're not going to ride home to-night, Stacy," he announced cordially. "I won't hear of it. It's a beast of a storm, and it's all nonsense. We'll put you up."

"Thanks, I can't, Mr. Evelyn. I'm up to the eyes, and I've got to be out with the dawn to-morrow. Miss Rawlins wants me to look at Tiddledywinks' shoulder after dinner and then I'll paddle along. The storm's nothing. It's about blown itself out now."

In vain the host entreated. His guest would not stay. A few moments after the company had arisen from the table, Alice exuded herself.

"I'm going up for my boots and a cape, Joe," she called.

"All right. Good night. I'll see you 'til again soon. Thank you, Mrs. Evelyn. Oh, my slicker is outside; don't bother. Good night again!" Stacy bowed himself from the room, donned his storm raiment, and a moment later Alice, bundled to the eyes, joined him in the hall. Together they made their way across the gardens. "Hand it over," he said softly.

"Not now. Wait." The groom on watch turned on the electric switch, flooding the stables with a noontide glare. The horses in their box stalls, adorned with their names in gold letters, whinnied and stamped gently.

Alice led the way down the matted and speckled aisle and sniffed happily the clean odors of spar winks and hay. "Here's Tiddledywinks," she announced, lifting the latch and sliding back the door. A velvet nose was thrust into her hand as the hunter snickered his delight.

"Do you see how he favors that foot?" she said.

A few pinches and a knowing rub appeared to satisfy the connoisseur. "Little strain, that's all." He rose and turned to the groom behind him. "Williams, bring me a bandage. I'll put him up myself. Be saddling my horse while I'm doing it, will you?" The groom touched his cap and walked rapidly away. "Now!" he whispered.

Sound limbed, gentle eyed, and discreet, Tiddledywinks was the only witness to the transfer.

Bright skies and the frosty breath of coming winter followed the night of storm and turmoil. Wendham rose early, and again went into the garden, passing and re-passing the torn drapery of vines beneath the windows of Mrs. Gaynor's former apartment. The ground was trampled, but his own search would account for that sufficiently while the heavy rainfall and flow from the eaves washing the earth left no definite trace. Certainly the bag was gone. Had Nellie removed and rehidden it without Adele's knowledge? Possibly. He must find out from her. It was early, too early to approach her. He went quietly to the nurse to learn the report of the night.

Vreeman was superintending the lighting of the fires. Wendham replied absently to his respectful inquiries.

"The detectives have been prowling about the place all night," the butler complained. "Albert, there, heard 'em over in the servants' wing. I don't think, sir, if they found anything they'd let on; that's what I says."

The suggestion almost took Wendham's breath. Perhaps that was the solution of the mystery. Was the suspicious Vreeman's theory the right one? And what then? Was Nellie safe? Could blackmail?—He left the loquacious butler to discuss matters with the obsequious under-servant and walked thoughtfully. The clear, yellow flame from the logs in the farther room attracted him. Pausing before them he gazed as if fascinated at the leaping blaze. Oh, the many questions he must answer before he could unravel the tangle. Still in a brown study he sank upon the padded expanse of the great chair. His hand fell upon something cold. He glanced at it. It was the clipping shears from Evelyn's desk. He remembered seeing it lying there among the catalogues and magazines. At the same time he noticed two or three minute scraps of paper adhering to the velvet of the upholstery. Idly he picked them up and flicked them into the fire. How long he sat there, his fingers idly opening and shutting the scissors, he did not know.

CHAPTER XVI.

Wendham was aroused from his reverie by the sound of Alice's firm, booted tread.

"Up early," she smiled at him. "A corking old day!" Her feelings belied her words. She had suddenly recalled her carelessness in not returning the shears to their place, and had hastened down to put them back before anyone should happen upon them. Not that they would arouse suspicion; "but one never can tell." It was not encouraging to see the tell tale instrument in Wendham's hands. However, Wendham was the least of possible enemies. "What sort of a night did Nellie have?" she asked solicitously.

"Just as good as and better than

we had any right to hope for," he answered, rising.

She looked eagerly into his face. "Better than you had, I wager. Why, man alive, buck up; don't look so done. If the rest see you with that face they'll think Nellie's all in." She laid a sympathetic hand upon his arm.

He looked down into her honest, affectionate eyes, and read there a wholesome and sweet understanding of part, at least, of his torturing anxiety.

"And she isn't done. I've a feeling everything's working out right. You'll save her, I know."

His look accepted her sympathy gratefully.

"Please God, I'll save her," he said softly. His hand fell in comradeship upon Alice's slim shoulder. "But between here and there—Oh, it's a long road, and a bad road—Hello! who's arriving so early? Another reporter?"

A sharp ring at the main entrance was repeated. Wendham walked quickly across the room. For a moment Alice hesitated; then caught up the scissors and, darting into the den, dropped them amidst their familiar surroundings. An instant later she was beside Wendham, hurrying down toward the hall.

"It isn't safe to leave that tool on the chair—somebody might cut themselves," she remarked casually. "Heavens! what's the matter with Albert?"

That functionary was shaking a small boy. "How many times have I got to tell you tradesmen's boys to go to the rear entrance? Get out o' here."

But the boy stood his ground, blubbing. "Dad told me to go right up and ring, he did, and my pa's the sheriff. He'll have you arrested, he will," wailed the youngster.

"The sheriff!" Wendham advanced and drew the child within doors. "What is the matter?"

"It's a letter from my dad for Mister Evelyn, and dis feller, he wouldn't even let me say what my dad said I was ter; and he says, my dad did, I was to put that word inter Mr. Evelyn's own hands—so, now!" He turned and protruded a healthy but insulting tongue at the discomfited Albert.

"Here," said Wendham, "I'll take the note to him."

"Nope," said the youngster doggedly.

"The boy stood on the burning deck." Alice laughed delightedly. "Albert, you'd better tell Mr. Evelyn to come at once."

"But it isn't nine o'clock yet, Miss," protested the servant, "and Mr. Evelyn said—"

"Tell him Collins has sent a personal message," she ordered. "We'll stay here. Say, Tommy, did you ever see chickens like those?"

The man reluctantly retreated upstairs, while Alice introduced young Collins to the gaudy macaws.

"Gee!" exclaimed the boy enraptured; "gee! ain't they swell!"

"They lay eggs au gratin," explained Alice. "and they eat seed pearls and three spoons of spaghetti a day. They are very expensive, you see, but you sell the eggs au gratin, and that helps."

Not for days had Alice so regained her irresponsible gaiety. Wendham, anxiously awaiting the message of the sheriff, that night or night not mean so much to him, noticed it, and smilingly attributed it to Stacy's recent visit. But the moments dragged before Evelyn's step and voice sounded overhead, and his familiar figure, swathed in an unfamiliar bath robe, appeared on the stairs.

"What's all this—a note from Collins! Here, boy, thank you. Wait till I see about this, Albert, and then take that boy around to the kitchen and give him—" Evelyn had torn open the envelope and unfolded the inclosure. Tommy never learned whether jam or a spanking were to have been his portion. "What!" cried Evelyn, his face flushing crimson. "Alice! Wendham!—found! Thank God!" His hand shook so that he was unable to proceed. He held the paper fluttering toward Wendham, but Alice was before him. "Mr. Evelyn," she read.

"Dear Sir: I have the honor to inform you that I found the jewels, which are in my possession. I will call at ten-thirty and deliver the same. The reward will come in handy, as I have several as per bearer to raise."

"Yours respectfully,
"SAMUEL J. COLLINS."

"Isn't that great! Isn't that the lucky! I must tell Patty!" Evelyn had bolted upstairs.

Albert, lost to all sense of dignity, sped toward the kitchen.

"Go tell Adele, Boyd," cried Alice jubilantly. "I'll take care of the messenger of good fortune."

"Well!" said Patty, when her husband breathlessly told the story. "Thank goodness now Mrs. Lawdon will go away. I've never been so disturbed in all my life. What time did you say it was, and when is that man coming? My dear, I can at last get an hour's real rest. You might tell Charlie, I suppose. He'll be relieved to know. Pull the blind a little lower—thank you."

Mr. Lawdon's reception of the news and its bearer was marked by almost tearful relief. But when he joyously broke into his wife's room, excitedly announcing the tidings, he was met by a new and surprising side of his wife's complicated nature. Her first flush of delight having passed, her face took on a vindictive expression that surprised even the unobservant Charlie.

"Did he say who the thief is?" she demanded. "I mean to have justice. I mean to have the law."

"He did not say in the note," he answered, crestfallen. "Now you must not make a scene. You've got your things—don't be hard."

But Mrs. Lawdon had rung for her maid, and was already dressing with an air of determination that boded ill for some one. Lawdon retired to complete his toilet.

Long before the appointed hour the household was busy discussing the new turn events had taken. Two disconsolate detectives occupied an unobtrusive seat, and the bustle and buzz of the kitchen might have been heard on the roof. The excitement spread as if by wireless message. The telephone was congested with inquiries. Jones and his "sort of cousin, the gardener's wife," went on each other's shoulders in the seclusion of the lodge.

When Collins at last appeared he was surrounded by a crowd of countrymen, small boys and reporters. He arrived in state in the best surry the local livery could boast, and clutched a small black valise, borrowed from Dr. J. Burton Brown for the dignity of the occasion. His reception was all that even he could have desired. Conducted by Mr. Evelyn in person to the drawing-room, he found the household, glowing with excitement, assembled to meet him.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," he bowed. It is my pleasure and honor to return herewith these gems to the lady." He bowed toward Mrs. Lawdon in his best Fourth-of-July-oration manner. "Will you, Mr. Evelyn, have the goodness to read from this published list of the stolen articles of jewelry? I will verify the count from the contents of this bag."

"But, where—?" began Mrs. Lawdon.

Collins held up a restraining hand. "All in good time, Mrs. Lawdon. Mr. Evelyn, may I trouble you?" Pompously he unclasped the bag, and as each item was read he sought out and lovingly displayed the jewel upon the mahogany. "As you see," he bowed, when the last gem was held forth flashing in the light, "not a stone is missing. I think I may say I congratulate Mrs. Lawdon."

RUMOR FORETOLD HIS DEATH

Young California Man Crushed to Death Next Day at Spot Indicated.

Salinas, Cal.—Like a harbinger of his fate, a rumor spread through this town early that Percy Morse, a wealthy young seed grower, was killed beneath his overturned automobile between this place and his home in Watsonville. It caused keen concern among Morse's friends and word was telephoned to his home. There it was learned that Morse was all right.

The moment the rumor reached Morse, he jumped into his car and started for Salinas to set the anxiety of all his friends at rest. He personally visited them all and assured them he was not dead and did not mean to die for a long time. He drove up and down the main thoroughfares meeting chance acquaintances and chatting gayly with them about the rumor.

How it started is a mystery. Morse was curious and sought to trace it to its source. He failed and finally started for his home. He went alone. After he left the town his friends were mystified concerning the rumor and could not drive an evil presentiment from their minds.

Within a few hours Morse was found in his wrecked machine at exactly the spot described in the early rumor. He was dying and lived only a few hours after he was taken to his home in Watsonville. The tragic death of Morse, coupled with the strange rumor, has caused much excitement here. No one can explain how the rumor happened.

A Good Qualification.

The mystery of the negro mind is illustrated by a story which the Philadelphia Record prints. John, the colored applicant for the position of butler in a family living in one of the fashionable suburbs of Philadelphia, strove to impress his would-be employer with his entire fitness for the place.

"Oh, yes, suh," he said, "I's sholy well educated, suh. I's passed a civil service examination."

"Indeed," responded the gentleman, "that is very fine, I'm sure, but I can't say that that will be of any particular value to be in a butler."

"No?" said the surprised applicant. "It shore is strange how gentlemen's stastes do diger. Now Mr. Williams,"—naming his former employer,—"he say, 'John, one thing I deman' is civil service to mah guests,' an' he done gave me a zamination r' there, suh, an' that's the truf."

Then the gentleman saw a great light. He replied:

"Yes, you are quite right, John. Civil service is a very important and rather unusual virtue, so if you have passed that examination, I think we'll consider you engaged."

Cat and Mouse Pillar.

In Lichfield Cathedral the central pillar of the chapter house and the clustered shaft and vaulting ribs which spread from it are very fine specimens of early English work. One of the pillars contains the quaint design of a cat with a mouse in its mouth. It is supposed to have been executed in a "morose spirit" by one of the masons, who, so far as the stone permitted, made it quite "realistic."

Woman's World

"THE DEVIL'S FRUIT CAKE."

Mrs. Wilson of Nashville, Baker Extraordinary to the World at Large.

Here is the story of a woman who finds herself famous without malice aforethought upon her part. A career has, in fact, thrust itself upon her. All she has done has been to develop an inborn art impulse, a rather wonderful palate, not along the lines of least resistance, but of most profit. As a consequence she has kings and noblemen, presidents and cabinet ministers, not to mention simple millionaires, among her patrons. The truly wonderful thing is that it all comes not from ambition, but from doing woman's work in what should be woman's way, which is to say better than ever it was done before.

So much for the general particulars. Here follow others much more interesting: Name, Elizabeth Lyle Wilson; local habitation, Nashville, Tenn.; condition, happy wife and mother; profession, cakemaker in extraordinary to the world at large. And such cake as she makes! To eat of it is something betwixt an experience and an epoch. Indeed, it leaves a haunting memory, an aching void which only more of the same cake can fill.

Small wonder, then, that no less a person than William Howard Taft has



MRS. ELIZABETH LYLE WILSON.

served in a way as the cake's press agent.

Mr. Taft while at Nashville, just before the 4th of March, ate of her "devil's fruit cake," which is innocuous to sound digestion despite its name. It captivated him. He took back with him to Washington a generous sample. As a consequence Mrs. Wilson has received orders for several cakes to be sent to the White House at Christmas-tide. She has express receipts showing that her cakes have been delivered at the courts of Vienna and St. James; also to all the American duchesses and not a few other expatriates. They have gone safe as far as Australia and Brazil and even into Russia. Mrs. Wilson never saw the inside of a cooking school. All she has done is through nature's free gift. When she married, back in the nineties, homemaking and homekeeping were, as they still are, her delight. She had not the least thought of doing more than delight the palates of her family and her friends. From baking for her friends she drifted into regular work, much against her husband's will. He was taking care of that family. Still, the venture has not bred family dissension. How could it when through her work the worker has found not only profit, but happiness and health?

The maker of this delicious cake has very generously given the recipe for the dainty:

One pound of flour, browned and sifted; one pound of butter, one pound of sugar, twelve eggs, four pounds of raisins, one pound of homemade citron, one pound of crystallized cherries and pineapple mixed, one pound of almonds cut fine and soaked overnight in rosewater, one pound of pecan meats cut small, one glass grape jelly, half a glass good cordial, one glass of good whisky or brandy, tablespoonsful each of powdered allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg and teaspoonful of powdered cloves. Soak all the fruit twelve hours in the whisky, cream together butter and sugar, add to them eggs yolks beaten very light, then the cordial, spices and jelly. Put in next two teaspoonfuls of melted chocolate, next add the white of eggs beaten stiff and part of the flour. Roll the fruit in the rest of the flour and add to the mixture. Put in nuts last of all. If nuts are left out put in a third more fruit. Bake several hours, keeping a vessel of water in the oven until almost done.

When the Wind Blows.

In an old house with its loose framework sensitive natures are often driven half wild by the rattling of windows on a blustery night. It is a good thing in preparation for such emergency to keep in each room four or five split clothespins to be used as wedges between the upper and lower sash.

Stout clothespins can also be forced into the latch of a cellar window in such a way that it is impossible to open it from the outside. This is a convenient bit of knowledge when catches so frequently break or the keys of noddies get mislaid.

POETRY WORTH READING

On a Visit.

When I go to my Gram'ma's an'
She gets done kissin' me
I wonder what's to happen nex'.
(Don't nave to 'cite no "Golden Tex"
At Gram'ma's—no, sir-ee!)

My Gram'ma, she puts on her specs
(That's so 'at she can see).
"More like his father ev'ry day;
Don't favor his ma's folks," she'll say,
"A mite, it 'pears to me."

My Gram-pa, when we go outdoors
To give th' horse his feed,
Stands me up 'gainst th' big barn door
An' marks it where I've grow'd some
more.

I'm 'growin' like a weed!"

My Gram-ma knows it's drefle hard
For busy folks like me
To have to stop an' take a nap,
An' so I sleep right on her lap;
An' arter,—we go see

If Mr. Gingersnap is home,—
He has a roun', tin house,—
An' I can "help mysef to some,"
An' mus'n't drop a single crum',
So's not to call th' mouse.

My gram-pa says I'll help him lots
If I'll hunt 'round an' see
Which pockets got his wintergreens
An' peppermint—I know he means
His candy! Some's for me!

W'en I'm all grow'd up tall an' big
I don't know w'ich I'll be—
A Gram'ma or a Gram-pa, 'cause
They're bot so good to me!
—Marie Louis Tompkins, in Harper's
Weekly.

Ballade of the Dreamland Rose.
Where the waves of burning cloud
are rolled
On the farther shore of the sunset
sea,
In a land of wonder that none be-
hold,
There blooms a rose on the Dream-
land Tree.

It grows in the Garden of Mystery
Where the River of Slumber softly
flows,
And wherever a dream has come to
be,
A petal falls from the Dreamland
Rose.

In the heart of the tree, on a branch
of gold,
A silvery bird sings endlessly
A mystic song that is ages old—
A mournful song in a minor key,
Full of the gamour of faery,
And whenever a dreamer's ears un-
close
To the sound of that distant mel-
ody,
A petal falls from the Dreamland
Rose.

Dreams and visions in hosts untold
Throng around on the moonlit lea;
Dreams of age that are calm and
cold,
Dreams of youth that are fair and
free—
Dark with a lone heart's agony,
Bright with a hope that no one
knows—
And whenever a dream and a dream
agree,
A petal falls from the Dreamland
Rose.

L'ENVOI.

Princess—you gaze in a reverie
Where the drowsy freight redly,
glows,
Slowly you raise your eyes to
me
A petal falls from the Dreamland
Rose.
—Brian Hooker, in Harper's Maga-
zine.

Enchantment.

Vanity peeps from her eyes,
Vanity sounds in her laughter—
Vanity nothing can ever disguise.
What is its lure to both foolish and
wise?
What are the men running after?
Still they throng round her wherever
she goes,
Seems a mild form of insanity.
I am as bad as the rest, goodness
knows.
Vanity! Just vanity!

Vanity's coiled in her hair,
Vanity gleams in each jewel—
Vanity driving us all to despair.
What is it makes it so easy to bear?
Why is it hard to be cruel?
Why do the rough and the rude, when
she's near,
Bow with a polished urbanity?
I'm like the rest of the fellows, I fear.
Vanity! Just vanity!

Vanity shows in her dress,
Vanity shoes her and gloves her.
Vanity's what her belongings express.
Why is it none of us likes her the
less?
Why is it every one loves her?
Well, she's a darling and dainty and
sweet,
Flower of female humanity,
That is the touch seems to make her
complete.
Vanity! Just vanity!

—Chicago News.

Local Option.

"You say that local option has been
of great benefit to this section of the
country?"

"Yes, sir," answered Col. Stillwell.
"As soon as a lot of us citizens realized
how far anybody would have to go
for a drink we organized a good
roads movement."