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The Mystery of Agatha Webb.

By Anna Katharine Green.

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"How came you to have the hand of the money taken from Agatha Webb's private drawer?"

It was a startling question, but it seemed to affect Amabel less than it did Frederick. It made him start, but she only turned her head a trifle aside, so that the peculiar smile with which she prepared to answer could be seen by any one standing below.

"Suppose you ask something less leading than that to begin with," she suggested in her high, unmusical voice. "From the searching nature of this inquiry you evidently believe I have information of an important character to give you concerning Mrs. Webb's un-happy death. Ask me about that. The other question I will answer later." The aplomb with which this was said,

lurement of more than ordinary subtle-ty, made Mr. Sutherland frown and Dr. Talbot look perplexed, but it did not embarrass Mr. Courtney, who made haste to respond in his driest accents.
"Very well, I am not particular as to what you answer first. A flower worm by you at the dance was found near Batsy's skirts before she was lifted up that morning. Can you explain this,

mixed as it was with a feminine al-

or, rather, will you?" "You are not obliged to, you know," put in Mr. Sutherland, with his inexorable sense of justice. "Still, if you would, it might rob these gentlemen of suspicions you certainly cannot wish them to entertain."

"What I say." she remarked slowly. "will be as true to the facts as if I stood here on my oath. I can explain how a flower from my hair came to be in Mrs. Webb's house, but not how it came to be found under Batsy's feet. That some one else must clear up." Her little finger, lifted from the rail, pointed toward Frederick, but no one saw this unless it was that gentleman himself. "I wore this orchid in my hair that night, and there would be nothing strange in its being afterward picked up in Mrs. Webb's house, because I was in that house at or near the time she was murdered."

"You in that house?" "Yes, as far as the ground floor; no farther." Here the little finger stopped pointing. "I am ready to tell you about it, sirs, and only regret I have delayed doing so so long, but I wished to be sure it was necessary. Your presence here and your first question show that it is."

There was suavity in her tone now not unmixed with candor. Sweetwater did not seem to relish this, for he moved uneasily on his feet and lost a shade of his self satisfied attitude. He had still to be made acquainted with all th ins and outs of the woman's remarkable nature.

"We are waiting," suggested Dr. Tal-She turned to face this new speaker,

and Frederick was relieved from the sight of her tantalizing smile.

"I will tell my story simply," said she, "with the simple suggestion that you believe me; otherwise you will make a mistake. While I was resting from a dance the other night I heard two of the young people talking about the Zabels. One of them was laughing at the old men, and the other was trying to relate some old story of early love which had been the cause, she thought, of their strange and melancholy lives. I was listening to them, but I did not take in much of what they were saying till I heard behind me an trascible voice exclaiming: 'You laugh, do you? I wonder if you would laugh so easily if you knew that these two poor old men haven't had a decent meal in a fortnight?' I didn't know the speaker, but I was thrilled by his words. Not had a good meal, these men, for a fortnight! I felt as if personally guilty of their suffering, and, happening to raise my eyes at/this minute and seeing through an open door the bountiful refreshments prepared for us all in the supper room, felt guiltier than ever. Suddenly I took a resolution. It was a queer one and may serve to show you some of the oddities of my nature. Though I was engaged for the next dance, and though I was dressed in the flimslest garments suitable to the occasion, I decided to leave the hall and carry some sandwiches down to these old men in their cottage. Procuring a bit of paper, I made up a bundle and stole out of the house without having said a word to anybody of my intention. Not wishing to be seen, I went out by the garden door, which is at the end of a dark hall." the 'Harebell Mazourka,' " interpolated

"Just as the band was playing

Sweetwater. Startled for the first time from her careless composure by an interruption of which it was impossible for her at that minute to measure either the mo-tive or the meaning, she ceased to play with her fingers on the baluster rail and let her eyes rest for a moment on the man who had thus spoken, as if she hesitated between her desire to anshe hesitated between her desire to annihilate him for his impertinence and a fear of the cold hate she saw actuating his every word and look. Then she went on, as if no one had spoken:

"I ran down the hill recklessly. I was bent on my errand and not at all afraid of the dark. When I reached that part of the road where the streets branch off, I heard footsteps in front

Slackening my pace so that I should not pass this person, whom I instinctively knew to be a man, I followed him till I came to a high board fence. It was that surrounding Agatha Webb's house, and when I saw it I could not help connecting the rather stealthy gait of the man in front of me with a story I had lately heard of the large sum of money she was known to have in her house. Whether this was before or after this person disappeared round the corner I cannot say, but no sooner had I become certain that he was bent upon entering this house than my impulse to follow him became greater than my precaution, and, turning aside



from the direct path to the Zabels', 1 hurried down High street just in time to see the man enter Mrs. Webb's front

gateway. "It was a late hour for visiting; but, as the house had lights in both its lower and upper stories, I should by good rights have taken it for granted that he was an expected guest and gone my own way to the Zabels'. But I did not. The softness with which this person stepped and the skulking way in which he hesitated at the front gate aroused my worst fears, and after he had opened that gate and slid in I was so pursued by the idea that he was there for

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no good that I stepped inside the gate myself and took my stand in the deep the right hand side of the walk. Did any one speak?"

There was a unanimous denial from the five gentlemen before her, yet she

did not look satisfied. "I thought I heard some one make a remark," she said and paused again for a half minute, during which her smile was a study. It was so cold and in such startling contrast to the vivid glances she threw everywhere except behind her on the landing where Frederick stood listening to her every word "We are very much interested," re

marked Mr. Courtney. "Pray go on." Drawing her left hand from the balustrade where it had rested, she looked at one of her fingers with an odd backward gesture. "I will," she said, and her tone was

hard and threatening. "Five minutes, no longer, passed when I was startled by a loud and terrible cry from the house, and, looking up at the secon story window, from which the sound proceeded, I saw a woman's figure banging out in a seemingly pulseless condition. Too terrified to move, I clung, trembling, to the tree, hearing and not hearing the shouts and laugh ter of a dozen or more men who at that minute passed by the corner on their way to the wharfs. I was dazed, I was choking, and only came to myself when sooner or later, I do not know how soon or how late, a fresh horro happened. The woman whom I had just seen fall almost from the window was a serving woman, but when heard another scream I knew that the mistress of the house was being attacked, and, riveting my eyes on those windows, I beheld the shade of one of them thrown back and a hand appear, flinging out something which fell in the grass on the opposite side of the lawn. Then the shade fell again, and, hearing nothing further, I ran to where the object flung out had fallen and, feeling for it, found and picked up an old fashioned dagger, dripping with blood. Horrified beyond all expression, I dropped the weapon and drew back, trembling, into my former place of con-

"But I was not satisfied to remain there. A curiosity, a determination even, to see the man who had committed this dastardly deed attacked me with such force that I was induced to leave my hiding place and even to enter the house where in all probability he was counting the gains he had just obtained at the price of such precious blood. The door, which he had not perfectly closed behind him, seemed to invite me in, and before I had realized my own temerity I was standing

in the hall of this ill fated house." The interest which up to this momen had been breathless now expressed it self in hurried ejaculations and broken words, and Mr. Sutherland, who had listened like one in a dream, exclaime eagerly and in a tone which proved that he for the moment at least be lieved this more than improbable tale: "Then you can tell us if Philemo was in the little room at the momen

As every one there present realized the importance of this question, s general movement took place, and each and all drew nearer as she met their eyes and answered placidly:

when you entered the house?"

"Yes; Mr. Webb was sitting in chair asleep. He was the only person I saw.

"Oh, I know he never committed this crime," gasped his old friend, in a relief so great that one and all seeme to share it.

"Now I have courage Go on, Miss Page." But Miss Page paused again to look

at her finger and give that sidewise toss to her head that seemed so uncalled for by the situation to any who did not know of the compact between herself and the listening man below. "I hate to go back to that moment, said she, "for when I saw the candle burning on the table and the husband of the woman above sitting there in unconscious apathy I felt something rise in my throat that made me deathly sick for a moment. Then I went right in where he was and was about to shake his arm and wake him when I detected a spot of blood on my finger from the dagger I had handled. That gave me another turn and led me to

wipe off my finger on his sleeve."
"It's a pity you did not wipe off your slippers, too," murmured Sweetwater.

Again she looked at him; again her eyes opened in terror upon the face of this man, once so plain and insignifcant in her eyes, but now so filled with menace she inwardly quaked before it, for all her apparent scorn.

"Slippers," she murmured.
"Did not your feet pass through that blood in the grass, as well as your

She did not answer. She held h To be Continued

"I think I'll let you measure me for a sack suit out of this cloth," said Crolly, indicating his preference. "Very well," said his tailor, "I can make you that suit for \$30 or \$100." "What's the idea of the two prices?" "Cash or credit."!



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