

The Woman in the Alcove

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

Author of "The Millionaire Baby," "The Filligree Ball," "The Leavenworth Case," Etc., Etc.
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Yet, being naturally generous, he was satisfied with a separation, and, finding it impossible to think of her as other than extravagantly fed, waited on and clothed, he allowed her a good share of his fortune with the one proviso, that she should not disgrace him. But the diamond she stole, or rather carried off in her naturally high-handed manner with the rest of her jewels. He had never given it to her. She knew the value he set on it, but not how he came by it, and would have worn it quite freely if he had not very soon given up to understand that the pleasure of doing so ceased when she left his house. As she could not be seen with it without occasioning public remark, she was forced, though much against her will, to heed his wishes, and enjoy its brilliancy in private. But once, when he was out of town, she dared to appear with this fortune on her breast, and again while on a visit west—and her husband had the jewel set to suit him, not in Florence, as Sears had said, but by a skillful workman he had picked up in great poverty in a remote corner of Williamsburg. Always in dread of some complication, he had provided himself with a second facsimile in paste, this time of an astonishing brightness, and this facsimile he had had set precisely like the true stone. Then he gave the workman a thousand dollars and sent him back to Switzerland. This imitation in paste he showed nobody, but he kept it always in his pocket; why, he hardly knew. Meantime, he had one confidant, not of his crime, but of his sentiments towards his wife, and the determination he had secretly made to proceed to extremities if she continued to disobey him.

This was a man of his own age or older, who had known him in his early days, and had followed all his fortunes. He had been the master of Fairbrother then, but he was his servant now, and as devoted to his interests as if they were his own—which, in a way, they were. For eighteen years he had stood at the latter's right hand, satisfied to look no further, but, for the last three his glances had strayed a foot or two beyond his master, and taken in his master's wife.

The feelings which this man had for Mrs. Fairbrother were peculiar. She was a mere adjunct to her great lord, but she was a very gorgeous one, and while he could not imagine himself doing anything to thwart him, whose bread he ate, and to whose rise he had himself contributed, yet if he could remain true to him without injuring her he would account himself happy. The day came when he had to decide between them, and against all chances, against his own preconceived notion of what he would do under these circumstances, he chose to consider her. This day came when, in the midst of growing complacency and an intense interest in some new scheme which demanded all his powers, Abner Fairbrother learned from the papers that Mr. Grey, of English parliamentary fame, had arrived in New York on an indefinite visit. As no cause was assigned for the visit beyond a natural desire on the part of this eminent statesman to see this great country, Mr. Fairbrother's fears reached a sudden climax, and he saw himself ruined and forever disgraced if the diamond now so unhappily out of his hands should fall under the eyes of his own wife, whose seeming quiet under its loss had not for a moment deceived him. Waiting only long enough to make sure that the distinguished foreigner was likely to accept social attentions, and so in all probability would be brought in contact with Mrs. Fairbrother, he sent her by his devoted servant a peremptory message, in which he demanded back his diamond; and, upon her refusing to heed this, followed it up by another, in which he expressly stated that if she took it out of the safe deposit in which he had been told she was wise enough to keep it, or wore it so much as once during the next three months, she would pay for her presumption with her life.

This was no idle threat, though she chose to regard it as such, laughing in the old servant's face and declaring that she would run the risk if the notion seized her. But the notion did not seem to seize her at once, and her husband was beginning to take heart, when he heard of the great ball about to be given by the Ramsdells and realized that if she were going to be tempted to wear the diamond at all, it would be at this brilliant function given in honor of the one man he had most cause to fear in the whole world.

Sears, seeing the emotion he was under, watched him closely. They had both been on the point of starting for New Mexico to visit a mine in which Mr. Fairbrother was interested, and he waited with inconceivable anxiety to see if his master would change his plans. It was while he was in this condition of mind that he was seen to shake his head at Mrs. Fairbrother's passing figure; a menace naturally interpreted as directed against her, but which, if we know the man, was rather the expression of his anger against the husband who could rebuke and threaten a creature, meanwhile, on Mr. Fairbrother's preparations went on, and three weeks before the ball, they started. Mr. Fairbrother had business in Chicago and business in Denver. It was two weeks and more before he reached La Junta. Sears counted the days. At La Junta they had a long conversation, or rather Mr. Fairbrother talked and Sears listened. The sum of what he said was this: He had made up his mind to have back his diamond. He was going to New York to get it. He was going alone, and as he wished no one to know that he had gone or that his plans had been in any way interrupted, the other was to continue on to El Moro and passing himself off as Fairbrother, hire a room at the hotel and shut himself up in it for ten days on any plea his ingenuity might suggest. If at the end of that time Fairbrother should rejoin him, well and good. They would go on together to Santa Fe. But if for any reason the former should delay his return, then Sears was to exercise his own judgment as to the length of time he was also to be in the borrowed personality; also as to the advisability of pushing on to the mine and entering on the work there, as had been planned between them.

Sears knew what all this meant. He understood what was in his master's mind, as well as if he had been taken into his full confidence, and openly accepted his part of the business with seeming alacrity, even to the point of supplying Fairbrother with suitable references as to the ability of one James Wellgood to fill a waiter's place at fashionable functions. It was not yet that he had given him. Seventeen years he had written the same, minus the last phrase. That was when he was the master and Fairbrother the man. But he did not mean to play the part laid out for him for all his apparent acquiescence. He began by exchanging clothes with him and other necessities and took the train for La Junta at or near the time that Fairbrother started east. But once at El Moro—once registered there as Abner Fairbrother from New York—he took a different course from the one laid out for him—a course which finally brought him to his master's wake and landed him at the same hour in New York.

This is what he did. Instead of shutting himself up in his room, he expressed an immediate desire to visit some neighboring mines, and, procuring a good horse, started off at the first available moment. He rode north, lost himself in the mountains, and wandered enough to lend himself to his plans. This guide he confided his horse for the few days he intended to be gone, paying him well and promising him additional money if, during his absence, he succeeded in circulating the report that he, Abner Fairbrother, had gone deep into the mountains, bound for such and such a camp.

Having thus provided an alibi, not only for himself, but for his master, too, in case he should need it, he took

the direct road to the nearest railway station, and started on his long ride east. He did not expect to overtake the man he had been personating, but fortune was kinder than is usual in such cases, and owing to a delay caused by some accident to a freight train, he arrived in Chicago with a few hours of Mr. Fairbrother, and started out of that city on the same train. But not on the same car. Sears had caught a glimpse of Fairbrother on the platform, and was careful to keep out of his sight. This was easy enough. He bought a compartment and a sleeper and stayed in it till they arrived at the Grand Central Station. Then he hastened out, and, fortune favoring him with another glimpse of the man in whose movements he was so interested, followed him into the streets. Fairbrother had shaved off his beard before leaving El Moro. Sears had shaved his off on the train. Both were changed, the former the more, owing to a peculiarity of his mouth which up till now he had always thought best to cover. Sears, therefore, walked behind him without fear, and was almost at his heels when this owner of one of New York's most notable mansions, entered, with a spruce air, the doors of a prominent caterer.

Understanding the plot now, and having everything to fear for his mistress, he walked the streets for some hours in a state of great indecision. Then he went up to her apartment. But he had no sooner come within sight of it than a sense of disloyalty struck him and he slunk away, only to come sidling back when it was too late, and she had started for the great city. Trembling with apprehension, but still strangely divided in his impulses, wishing to serve master and mistress both, without disloyalty to the one or injury to the other, he hesitated and argued with himself, till his fears for the latter drove him to Mr. Ramsdell's home.

The night was a stormy one. The heaviest snow of the season was falling with a high gale blowing down the Sound. As he approached the house, which, as we know, is one of the modern ones in the Riverside district, he felt his heart fail him. But as he came nearer and got the full effect of glowing lights, seductive music, and the cheery bustle of crowding carriages, he saw in his mind's eye such a picture of his beautiful mistress, threatened, unknown to herself, in a quarter she little realized, that he lost all sense of what had hitherto deterred him. Making then and there his great choice, he looked about for the entrance, with the full intention of seeing and warning her.

But this, he presently perceived, was totally impracticable. He could neither go to her nor expect her to come to him; meanwhile, time was passing, and if his master was there—the thought made his head dizzy, and, situated as he was, among the carriages, he might have been run over by his confusion if his eyes had not suddenly fallen on a lighted window, the shade of which had been inadvertently left up.

Within this window, which was only a few feet above his head, stood the glowing image of a woman clad in pink and sparkling with jewels. Her face was turned from him, but he recognized her splendor as that of the one woman who could never be too gorgeous for his taste; and, alive to this unexpected opportunity, he made for this window with the intention of showing her to her and so attracting her attention.

But this proved futile, and, driven at last to the end of his resources, he tore out a slip of paper from his note-book and in the dark and with the blinding snow in his eyes, wrote the few broken sentences which he thought would best warn her, without compromising his master. The means he took to reach her with this note I have already related. As soon as he saw it in her hands he fled the place and took the first train west. He was in a pitiable condition, when, three days later, he reached the small station from which he had originally set out. The haste, the exposure, the horror of the crime he had failed to avert, had undermined his hitherto excellent constitution, and the symptoms of a serious illness were beginning to make themselves manifest. But he, like his indomitable master, possessed a great fund of energy and willpower. He saw that if he was to save Abner Fairbrother (and now that Mrs. Fairbrother was dead, his master was all the world to him), he must make Fairbrother's alibi good; by carrying on the deception as planned by the latter, and getting as soon as possible to his camp in the New Mexico mountains. He knew that he would have strength to do this and he went about it without sparing himself.

Making his way into the mountains, he found the guide and his horse at the place agreed upon and, paying the guide enough for his services to insure a quiet tongue, rode back toward El Moro where he was met and sent on to Santa Fe already related. Such is the real explanation of the well-known unintelligible scrawl found in Mrs. Fairbrother's hand after her death. As to the one which left Miss Grey's beside for this same house, it was, alike in the writing and sending, the loving break of a very sick and tender-hearted girl. She had noted the look with which Mr. Grey had left her, and in her delicious state, thought that a line in her own hand would convince him of her good condition and make it possible for him to enjoy the evening. She was, however, too much afraid of her nurse to write it openly, and though we never found that scrawl it was doubtless not very different in appearance from the one with which I had confounded it. The man to whom it was intrusted stopped for too many warm-trappers during the last year was greater than any former catch for some time. Black, silver, cross and red foxes and lynx are abundant, and it is no uncommon thing for a trapper to net \$500 for his winter's work. In the near future three railways will be operating throughout this district, and the past summer two survey parties have been working for the C. N. R., and two more have been in the neighborhood of Jasper Pass in connection with the G. T. P. A fifth survey party has also been working in the same pass.

The commission for some time past has had the matter of investigation under their advisement because communications which have reached it, alleged the effect of alleged combinations is to suppress competition. The active work of the inquiry will be delegated to some responsible person in whom the commission has full confidence and upon whose report a decision will be reached as to what, if any, further steps shall be taken.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA FRIEND OF POOR

Beloved for Her Kindness, Hailed Throughout Empire on Her Birthday.

London, Dec. 4.—"The Queen, God Bless Her," was a toast enthusiastically pledged in all parts of the British Empire Friday, the occasion being Queen Alexandra's birthday. The Queen has endeavored herself to all classes of her husband's subjects by her tact and sympathetic consideration for the poor and afflicted.

Her deafness is causing her much trouble. At the opera one evening, on a hint from Lady De Grey, some of the stage business of "La Bohème" was hurriedly rearranged so that Mme. Melba and Signor Zenatello could sing their duets nearer the royal box than usual.

Like her mother, the late Queen of Denmark, Alexandra possesses the gift of personal sympathy, and nobody would think from a recent photograph of the Queen and the little Prince Olaf that she was a grandmother.

A sorry characteristic of the Queen's kindness of heart is being told just now. Alexandra received an appeal from a distressed mother of her thoughtfulness she was in great want. With her usual generosity the Queen was anxious to respond to the appeal, but it was represented that by doing so she would lay herself open to constant future demands from the same source. Queen Alexandra, however, determined to do good by stealth, sent a bank note anonymously, quite forgetting that the envelope in which the note was inclosed bore the direction "Buckingham Palace," and thus disclosed the source whence this kindly help came.

It has been arranged that the King and Queen of Norway and Prince Olaf shall each plant a tree in the famous Royal Avenue at Sandringham. Ever since their majesties as Prince and Princess of Wales purchased their Norfolk seat, each sovereign, crown prince and other important royal person who has stopped there has planted a tree which was indicated by a metal tablet placed in the ground in front of it, the name of the planter and the date being engraved thereon.

The only tree which failed to flourish in this interesting collection was that planted by the late Duke of Clarence when he was a child. Shortly after his death this tree began to show signs of decay, and, notwithstanding all efforts made to revive it, a blight seemed to have touched it, and it had to be removed.

PEACE RIVER COUNTRY

Coal in Abundance—Settlers 120 Miles North of Surveyed Land.

Winnipeg, Dec. 5.—L. C. Ward, the Government land guide from Pembina, Athabasca River, is staying at Calgary for a short time, the first time in seven years. He has spent the last four years trading with the Indians in the far north, some 500 miles from Edmonton. For months at a time he has been alone, without seeing the face of a white man. He describes the development of the northern country during the last few years as something little short of marvelous.

"To my mind," said Mr. Ward in an interview, "there is no limit to the possibilities of the country. There is sufficient coal there, and most of it is surface coal, too, to supply the needs of Alberta for all eternity. The coal is not so hard as anthracite, and yet not so soft as the ordinary soft coal, which is used for domestic purposes. It has been described by experts as excellent for steam purposes. The principal beds lie in the neighborhood of the Great Smoky River."

In addition to this, the country all around the Great Smoky River is destined to become a great agricultural country. Already squatters have settled 120 miles farther than the country has been surveyed. The whole district is being rapidly settled up, and this is proved by the fact that already three flour mills and twenty-five to thirty binders are in operation. The firm of Lock & Larson have sent a representative, Mr. J. Livingston, to travel the country, and to report to them upon the extent and value of the spruce limits. For miles and miles the country is densely wooded, and, although it is true that a certain proportion of the timber is small poplar, which is practically useless for commercial purposes, there is an immense tract of land which is covered with valuable spruce.

"Game of all kind abounds in these vast forests, and the catch which has been made by the white and Indian trappers during the last year was greater than any former catch for some time. Black, silver, cross and red foxes and lynx are abundant, and it is no uncommon thing for a trapper to net \$500 for his winter's work. In the near future three railways will be operating throughout this district, and the past summer two survey parties have been working for the C. N. R., and two more have been in the neighborhood of Jasper Pass in connection with the G. T. P. A fifth survey party has also been working in the same pass."

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A Rousing Underwear Sale Thursday and Friday

Travelers' Samples: Perfect Goods

Three cases of underwear samples have just been opened up for this sale. One of the luckiest purchases we have ever made, too. Bought them so favorably that we are able to turn them over to you at extraordinary low prices. Prices that should prove a veritable magnet to draw crowds of shrewd shoppers into this store.

Remember, these are perfect goods. Travelers' samples are always the pick of the mills' stock, you know. And as the quantity of these excellent, perfect goods is limited early buying is the wisest course.

Now, just a glimpse of the big bargains:

One case of Ladies' Underwear, Vests and Drawers, White, black and gray. Nice, fine quality. Worth to 75c. Thursday and Friday, sale price.....	39c	Infants' Vests of fine wool. White; all sizes. Worth to 50c each. Thursday and Friday sale price.....	25c
One Case of Ladies' Underwear Samples. Fine white wool—soft and warm and comfortable. Both vests and drawers. Worth to \$1.25 each. Thursday and Friday sale price.....	75c	Ten dozen Ladies' White Fleece Lined Drawers. Worth to 75c garment. Thursday and Friday sale price.....	50c

A wide range of Children's Underwear Samples. Prices too numerous to mention—but every garment is a rare bargain, indeed.

1 Case Mill-End Prizes

500 yards mill ends Linen Huck Toweling. Worth 12½c and 15c yard. Sale price.....**8c and 10c**
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