THE CONCORD TIMES.

JOHN B. SHERRILL, Editor and Publisher

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Think-

About!

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The Woman In the Alcowe By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN,

Author of "The Millionsire Baby," "The Filigree Ball," "The House in the Mist," "The Amethyst Box," Etc.

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In "The Woman In the Alcove" Anna Katharine Green has woven a plot of unusual intricacy and interest. The mystery is most cleverly unravoled through the agency of no professional detective, but by a young woman whose heart is enlisted in the cause of one of the suspects. She is made to tell her story with all the well known skill of the author, which has won for her the highest place among American writers of stories of mystery.

CHAPTER L

WAS perhaps the plainest girl in the room that night. I was also the happiest-up to 1 o'clock. Then my whole world crumbled, or at least suffered an eclipse. Why and how I am about to

I was not made for love. This I had often said to myself, very often of late. glass. In figure I am too diminutive, in face far too unbeautiful for me to cherish expectations of this nature. Indeed love had never entered into my plan of life, as was evinced by the nurse's diploma I had just gained after three years of hard study and severe train-

I was not made for love. But if I had been, had I been gifted with height, in this hour of supreme satisfaction en into luxuries and-and"deformity, I knew well whose eye I to do this-a fair woman, large and of should have chosen to please, whose a bountiful presence, accustomed to heart I should have felt proud to win.

my heart-did I say heart? I should tain lazy grace irresistibly fascinating have said understanding, which is to the ordinary man; a gorgeously apsomething very different-when at the pareled woman, with a diamond on her end of the first dance I looked up from the midst of the bevy of girls by whom rand's fire figure energing from that I noticed her. She was not as fine as quarter of the hall where our host and His eye was roaming hither and thith- of mind I might have envied the homer, and his manner was both eager and age she received from all the men, not expectant. Whom was he seeking? excepting him upon whose arm I lean-Some one of the many bright and viva- ed. Later there was no one in the clous girls about me, for he turned al- world I envied less. most instantly our way. But which

passed Miss Sperry-passed her with animated and courtly manner totally a smile and a friendly word-and is opposed to the apathy, amounting to speaking to me, singling me out, offer- boredom, with which he had hitherto ing me his arm. He is smiling, too, not as he smiled on Miss Sperry, but more warmly, with more that is personal in it. I took his arm in a daze. The lights were dimmer than I thought. his eyes seldom rose to her face. They Nothing was really bright except his lingered mainly-and this was what for me. I forgot that I was plain, of ostrich plumes which this opulent forgot that I was small, with nothing beauty held against her breast. Was to recommend me to the eye or heart, he desirous of seeing the great diaand let myself be drawn away, asking mond she thus unconsciously (or was nothing, anticipating nothing, till I it consciously) shielded from his gaze? found myself alone with him in the It was possible, for, as I continued to fragrant recesses of the conservatory, note him, he suddenly bent toward her

Why had he brought me here into this fairyland of opalescent lights and fallen on the gem. intoxicating perfumes? What could he have to say-to show? Ah, in another moment I knew! He had seized | tion which I held with my lover on a my hands, and love, ardent love, came, certain yellow divan at the end of one

pouring from his lips. Could it be real? Was I the object of all this feeling, I? If so, then life

had changed for me indeed. Slient from rush of emotion I searched his face to see if this paradise, whose gates I was thus passionately bidden to enter, was indeed a verity or only a dream born of the excitement of the dance and the charm of a scene exceptional in its splendor and picturesqueness even for so luxurious a city matters and in this instance had gone could do so-would come to him then? strange, unusual and remote as any

But it was no mere dream. Truth

nor forced. beard, and so he soon made me believe. planned to raise it to the level of the and mine had followed them. The gen- stant, and I sat staring at the window "You have charmed me from the first. eye by having the alcove floor built a tlemen who had accompanied the lady opposite me with the feeling of one Your tantalizing, trusting, loyal self, few feet higher than the main one. A inside were coming out again, but oth- who has just seen a vision. Yet almost like no other, sweeter than any other, flight of low, wide steps connected the ers were advancing to take their immediately I forgot the whole occurhas drawn the heart from my breast. two, which, following the curve of the places, and soon she was engaged in rence in my anxiety as to Mr. Du-I have seen many women, admired wall, added much to the beauty of this many women, but you only have I portion of the hall.

loved. Will you be my wife?" I was dazzled, moved beyond any- never shipped. But the alcove remainthing I could have conceived. I forgot ed and, possessing as it did all the ad- at all? Because Mr. Durand did? Pos- was not even in sight, and I grew all that I had hitherto said to myself, vantages of a room in the way of heat sibly. I remember that for all his weary of the endless menu and the all that I had endeavered to impress and light, had been turned into a min- ardent lovemaking I felt a little piqued senseless chitchat of my companion upon my heart when I beheld him approaching, intent, as I believed, in his tature retreat of exceptional beauty. I that he should divide his attentions in and, finding him amenable to my proaching, intent, as I believed, in his tature retreat of exceptional beauty. The seclusion it offered extended, or this way. Perhaps I thought that for whims, rose from my seat at table and

****************** fiding in his honesty, trusting entirely to his faith, I allowed the plans and purposes of years to vanish in the glamour of this new joy and spoke the word which linked us together in a bond which half an hour before I had never dreamed would unite me to any

> His impassioned "mine, mine!" filled ly cup to overflowing. Something of he ecstasy of living entered my soul, which in spite of all I have suffered since recreated the world for me and made all that went before but the prelude to the new life, the new joy. Oh, I was happy, happy-perhaps too

happy! As the con ervatory filled and we passed back into the adjoining room the glimpse I caught of myself in one of the mirrors startled me into thinking so, for had it not been for the odd color of my dress and the unique way in which I wore my hair that night I should not have recognized the beaming girl who faced me so naively from the depths of the responsive

Can one be too happy? I do not know. I know that one can be too per-Thus far I have spoken only of myelaborate function; but, though enti-

tled by my old Dutch blood to a certain social consideration which I am happy to say never failed me, I even This knowledge came with a rush to carrying off her victories with a cerbreast too vivid for most women, almost too vivid for her. I noticed this was surrounded and saw Anson Du- diamond early in the evening, and then the diamoud, but she was very fine, hostess stood to receive their guests. and had I been in a less ecstatic frame

The ball was a private and very elegant one. There were some notable I thought I knew. I remembered at guests. One gentleman in particular whose house I had met him first, at was pointed out to me as an Englishwhose house I had seen him many man of great distinction and political times since. She was a lovely girl, importance. I thought him a very inwitty and vivaclous, and she stood at teresting man for his years, but odd this very moment at my elbow. In her and a trifle self centered, Though beauty lay the lure, the natural lure greatly courted, he seemed strangely for a man of his gifts and striking per- restless under the fire of eyes to which sonality. If I continued to watch I he was constantly subjected and only should soon see his countenance light happy when free to use his own in con-up under the recognition she could not templation of the scene about him. fail to give him. And I was right. In Had I been less absorbed in my own another instant it did, and with a happiness I might have noted sooner brightness there was no mistaking. But | than I did that this contemplation was one feeling common to the human heart | confined to such groups as gathered lends such warmth, such expressive about the lady with the diamond. But ness to the features. How handsome this I falled to observe at the time it made him look, how distinguished, and consequently was much surprised to come upon him at the end of one of But what does this mean? He has the dances talking with this lady in an

> met all advances. Yet it was not admiration for her person which he openly displayed. During the whole time he stood there

ears to link us to the scene we had with a look which was quite inexplicable to me. The lady had shifted her fan a moment, and his eyes had The next thing I recall with any definiteness was a tete-a-tete conversa-

of the halls To the right of this divan rose a cur-

tained recess, highly suggestive of romance, called "the alcove." As this alcove figures prominently in my story, I will pause here to describe it. It was originally intended to contain

a large group of statuary which our host, Mr. Ramsdell, had ordered from Italy to adorn his new house. He is a and earnestness were in his manner, advantageous display of this promised and his words were neither feverish work of art. Fearing the ponderous

The group was a failure and was

so we were happy to think, to the soiltary divan at its base on which Mr. been blind to a mere coquette's fasci-Durand and I were seated. With pos- nations sibly an andue confidence in the adtage of our position, we were discussing a subject interesting only to ing the various gentlemen who went uself to declare: "You are the woman I want, you and you only. And I that I had promised him a waltz. want you soon. When do you think you can marry me? Within a week-

Did my look stop him? I was starded. I had heard no incoherent phrase

more time than that to fit ourselves for journey or some transient pleasure. hardly realize my engagement yet." "You have not been thinking of it for hese last two months as I have." "No," I replied demurely, forgetting

everything else in my delight at this "Nor are you a nomad among clubs nd restaurants."

"No, I have a home." "Nor do you love me as deeply as l

This I thought open to argument. "The home you speak of is a luxurious one," he continued. "I cannot of fer you its equal. Do you expect me

"You know that I do not. Shall I, who deliberately chose a nurse's life when an indulgent uncle's heart and home were open to me, shrink from braving poverty with the man I love? We will begin as simply as you

"No," he peremptorily put in, yet edged to himself, "I will not marry you if I must expose you to privation man's fortune." or to the genteel poverty I hate. I love you more than you realize and wish to make your life a happy one. I cannot give you all you have been accustomed to in your rich uncle's house, but if matters prosper with me, if the chance have built on succeeds-and it will fail or succeed tonight-you will have those comforts which love will height

than on my face. Following his gaze I discovered what had distracted his attention. The lady with the diamond was approaching us on her way to the alcove. She was accompanied by two gentlemen, both strangers to me, and her head, sparkling with brilliants, was turning from one to the other with an indolent grace. I was not surprised that the man at my side quivered and made a start as if to rise. She was a gorgeous image. In comparson with her imposing figure in its trailing robe of rich pink velvet my diminutive frame in its sea green gown must have looked as faded and coloress as a half obliterated pastel,

"A striking woman," I remarked as saw he was not likely to resume the conversation which her presence had interrupted. "And what a diamond!" The giance he cast me was peculiar. "Did you notice it particularly?" he

Astonished, for there was something very uneasy in his manner so that I half expected to see him rise and join the group he was so eagerly watching without waiting for my lips to frame response, I quickly replied:

"It would be difficult not to notice what one would naturally expect to see only on the breast of a queen. But perhaps she is a queen. I should judge so from the homage which follows His eyes sought mine. There was

inquiry in them, but it was an inquiry did not understand.

"What can you know about dia monds?" he presently demanded. 'Nothing but their glitter, and glitter is not all. The gem she wears may be a very tawdry one."

I flushed with humiliation. He was a dealer in gems-that was his business-and the check which he had put upon my enthusiasm certainly made me conscious of my own presumption. Yet I was not disposed to take back smile. It seemed to change the world aroused my curiosity-on the great fan my words. I had had a better opportunity than himself for seeing this remarkable jewel, and, with the perversity of a somewhat ruffled mood, I burst forth as soon as the color had subsided from my cheeks:

"No, no! It is glorious, magnificent I never saw its like, I doubt if you with only the throb of music in our and as quickly raised himself again ever have, for all your daily acquaintance with jewels. Its value must be enormous. Who is she? You seem to

> It was a direct question, but I reif he had ever heard them, and it was dered, with the forced animation of one whose thoughts are elsewhere that he finally my gaze from the scene before mereturned to the old plea:

man of original ideas in regard to such he would know by tomorrow if he even seen develop, at something as He would not say in a week. That phantasm, yet distinct enough in its constructed with a special view to an was perhaps too soon. But in a outlines for me to get a decided imadvantageous display of this promised month? Would I not promise to be pression of a square of light surroundhis in a month?

I was thus doubly engaged in listen-

ing to my lover's words and in watchsolves when Mr. Durand interrupted up and down the steps when a former partner advanced and reminded me Loath to leave Mr. Durand, yet seeing no way of excusing myself to Mr. Fox, I cast an appealing glance at the former and was greatly chagrined to find him already on his feet.

"Enjoy your dance," he cried. have a word to say to Mrs. Fairbrother," and was gone before my new partner had taken me on his arm. Was Mrs. Fairbrother the lady with the diamond? Yes. As I turned to enter the parlor with my partner I caught a glimpse of Mr. Durand's tall figure just disappearing from the step

shind the sage green curtains. "Who is Mrs. Fairbrother?" I inquired of Mr. Fox at the end of the

Mr. Fox, who is one of society's perennial beaux, knows everybody. "She is-well, she was Abner Fairbrother's wife. You know Fairbrother, the millionaire who built that curious structure on Eighty-sixth street. At are mighty fine boys of yours." present they are living apart-an amicable understanding, 4 believe. Her diamond makes her conspicuous. It is one of the most remarkable stones in

New York, perhaps in the United States. Have you observed it?" "Yes-that is, at a distance. Do you

think her very handsome?" "Mrs. Fairbrother? She's called so, but she's not my style." Here he gave with a certain hesitancy which seemed | me a killing glance. "I admire women to speak of doubts he hardly acknowl- of mind and heart. They do not need to wear jewels worth an ordinary

I looked about for an excuse to leave this none too desirable partner. "Let us go back into the long ball," I urged. "The ceaseless whirl of these dancers is making me dizzy."

With the ease of a gallant man he took me on his arm, and soon we were promenading again in the direction of the alcove. A passing glimpse of its interior was afforded me as we turned regularity of feature or even with that attracted very little attention and He was becoming incoherent and to retrace our steps in front of the yeleloquence of expression which redeems awoke small comment. There was an this time with his eyes fixed elsewhere low divan. The lady with the diamond pink velvet she wore protruded across the gap made by the half drawn curtains, just as it had done a half hour before. But it was impossible to see her face or who was with her. What I could see, however, and did was the figure of a man leaning against the wall at the foot of the steps. At first I thought this person unknown to me; then I perceived that he was no other than the chief guest of the evening, the Englishman of whom I have previous

> His expression had altered. He looked now both anxious and absorbed -particularly anxious and particularly



absorbed so much so that I was not surprised that no one ventured to approach him. Again I wondered and again I asked myself for whom or for what he was waiting. For Mr. Durand to leave this lady's presence? No, no; I would not believe that. Mr. Durand could not be there still, yet some women make it difficult for a man to leave them, and, realizing this, I could not forbear casting a parting glance behind me as, yielding to Mr. Fox's importunties, I turned toward the supper room. It showed me the Englishman in the act of lifting two cups of the reception room door. As his manceived no reply. Mr. Durand's eyes ner plainly betokened whither he was had followed the lady, who had lin- bound with this refreshment, I felt all gered somewhat ostentatiously on the my uneasiness vanish and was able to top step, and they did not return to take my seat at one of the small tables me till she had vanished with her com- with which the supper room was filled panions behind the long plush curtains and for a few minutes at least lend au which partly veiled the entrance. By ear to Mr. Fox's vapid compliment and this time he had forgotten my words, trite opinions. Then my attention wan-

I had not moved nor had I shifted the ordinary scene of a gay and well When would I marry him? If he filled supper room-yet I found myself could offer me a home in a month-and looking, as if through a mist I had not ing the figure of a man in a peculiar effect of a pedestal large enough to What I answered I scarcely recall. pose not easily imagined and not easi-"I love you! I need you!" So I hold such a considerable group, he had His eyes had stolen back to the alcove, ly described. It all passed in an in-Why should this interest me? Why or he would have found an opportunity should I notice her or look that way of joining me long before this. He

ances standing just outside the supper coops door. As I listened to their greetings some impulse led me to cust another glance down the hall toward the alcove. A man-a waiter-was iscountered those of Mr. Ramsdell, who was advancing hurriedly to meet bim, he plunged down the steps with a crywhich drew a crowd about the two in

What was it? What had happened? Mad with an anxiety I did not stop to define, I rushed toward this group now swaying from side to shie in irrepressible excitement, when sublenly everything swam before me, and I fell in a swoon to the floor.

Some one had shouted aloud "Mrs. Fairbrother has been nturdered

and her diamond stolen! Lock the

Rode no Cyclopaedias.

Even a book agent sometimes fails of achievement through unforeseen misunderstanding.

affably to a Texan whose record he we manage them things. I believe had looked up beforehand, "those "The finest in the country, stranger," said the Colonel.

finest in Texas." "I reckon you buy them anything

Why, stranger, I buy them anything they need, whether they want it or not

The Colonel looked at him in astonishment. "Why, stranger," he said, "them boys of mine don't need any cyclopaedia. They ride mules."

Used To It.

Mrs. Wickwire If you go first, you will wait for me on the other shore, won't you dear? Mr. Wickwire-I suppose so; having to wait for you.

the past to years, it is a med-icine made to cure. It has never been known to fail. If your called is sick get a

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ZEKE BILKINS' LETTER Raleigh Enterprise.

I notis in a paper that they air reformin' some more down in North Carolina. If this thing keeps up the State will be so gude by the time I start home that they won't let an old sinner like me git back into the State onless I perfess religion an make a liberal contribushun ter the ampane fund.

Acordin' ter the latest news that hes drifted into camp by freight trains an' people passin' through, they air goin' ter stop merchants frum displayin' laties stockins in store windows in one ov the North Carolina towns. I fergit whether hit iz Durham er Brassfield that is to be

Hit seems that I am always at the wrong place at the rite time. If I wuz at home I would join in that campane an' would saddle up Bob an' ride eround an' help chase old Nick across the State line inter South Carolina, where he originally cum frum. We can't be too careful how they call 'em hosery among the quality. That iz just a name got up by old Satan ter fool people. Hosery air very useful things, but hit is powerful dangerous an the legisla-ter orter be called an pass a few special acks suppressin' hosery. I am in favor ov gittin' tergether fer the purpose of discussin' the hosery evil, an' ter form sum sort ov an' "Then, Colonel, let me sell you a anti-hosery leege, so hit will git into cyclopaedia for them. There's noth- the party platform an' give a few ng else will do them so much good." polytishuns a chance ter go ter Con-

I wuz discussin' the hosery question with Betsy sum time ergo, an' she sed hit wuz a shame fer the goody-goody peeple ter be razin sich a row erbout nothin' but a ordinary garmint worn every day in the year. knowed then that sum fools hed got loose in the land, fer when Betsy says a thing ain't rice or iz rite. know hit iz just that way, purvided never went anywhere yet without hit ain't sumpthin' that changes my arrangemints. She iz the best an the smartest woman in the United

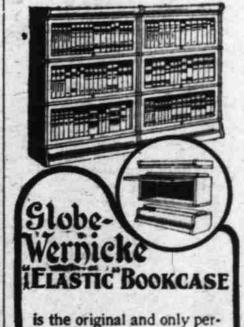
> I am fixin' ter go home soon, an I want hit fully understood before I go home that I hev never knowed Betsy to be wrong about anything, an' if she wuz I wouldn't speek ov hit in public, nor in her presence, fer sich things always rile Betsy, an' she makes hit hot fer me. But I always miss Betsy when we air far apart. The only time that I wuz erway frum her long an' sorter fergot her wuz durin' ov the war. I got exsitement ernuff then and didn't miss her so much.

As ever, ZEKE BILKINE.

Young Man-"I-er-have called to ask your daughter's hand." Her Father-"You can have it, and welcome, young man-that is, if you can induce her to take it out of my

REMEMBER

For want of a nail the shoe was lost, For the want of a shoe the horse was lost.



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