

John Gresham's Girl

by
Concordia Merrel

(Copyright)—WNU Service.

CHAPTER XIII —22— Freedom at Last

When Sir John went to the drawing room in search of Lucy, he found her sitting there, straining and waiting. She sprang up as he came in, asking:

"Well?" on a sharp note of anxiety.

"Lucy, dear, he's terribly broken up."

"He's a fine boy at heart, Lucy. . . . I could wish that things were."

"He broke off, evidently tremendously wrong by the emotion he had seen in Lee and felt himself."

"I must go to him, dad," cried Lucy, her lips quivering.

"She started for the door, but he stopped her."

"Lucy, he . . . he asked me not to let you go to him. . . . He doesn't want to see you, dear."

"She turned and faced him, her eyes wide and full of pain."

"He asked you . . . ? Dad, is that true?"

"There was a cry in those words that Sir John missed."

"Yes, he said that, and Lucy, he meant it. . . . Come home with me now, darling. . . . It is really best."

"The anxiety and wretchedness of the next few days were awful. Lucy couldn't sleep for wondering what Jim was doing."

"How he was, and what he was thinking and planning."

"And she could not think out anything clearly, because all this put her into such a state of confusion."

"One thought contradicted another, one emotion was at war with the next."

"She endured four days of it, and then went to the flat in an endeavor to see him."

"There, to her complete amazement, she found Perry St. Abb. But she did not find Jim."

"He's gone away," St. Abb told her. "He went yesterday, and I don't know where. Nor when he'll be back."

"Perry?" she cried, looking at him with wide, tragic eyes. "He . . . he hasn't gone . . . for . . . for good, has he?"

"No, of course not," he soothed her. "That isn't like him, is it?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know. Everything's so . . . confusing."

"She swallowed back the tears that were threatening. Then, 'Perry, what made you come back to him? Had you heard . . . ?' She broke off."

"Not until he told me," he answered. "I had, badly, on my conscience. I'd judged and deserted him. I felt that I'd rattled, and that's far from being a jolly feeling. What you said the day I left, haunted me a good deal. So I came back two days ago. He thought I'd heard of his official exoneration, but I hadn't heard. A syllable of it; nor of his imprisonment or anything. . . . I just came back because I realized that I'd condemned him, knowing nothing. . . . I don't applaud the Linforths business but I do understand it."

"St. Abb's young, engaging face was very serious; his voice intensely earnest. It was, perhaps, one of the longest speeches he'd ever made in all his life."

"He seemed to become aware of that, and smiled a touch self-consciously as he added, with a hint of the old airiness: 'So I suggested that if he wanted a Man Friday again, I was ready to come and spread my footprints all over this highly polished flat of his. . . . what?'"

"A little laugh jarred from her. It was a great relief to him to hear it. The sight of her pale, strained face, the sound of her lifeless voice, cut him badly."

"As for his being away now," he added cheerfully, "I don't honestly think it means much. Just that he wanted to be by himself. . . . out of town. . . . Or something. . . . Really, you mustn't worry about that."

"No," she said, as bravely as she could. "I suppose I mustn't. It's a little difficult, sometimes."

"She stopped, and caught a sharp little breath. Then added, in a new tone: 'Did he mention Jocelyn?'"

"Not in detail. But enough to make me think she'd been busy in her own rather infernal way. I saw her yesterday and had a talk with her. It was a heart-to-heart, with masks well off. I can tell you."

"I shall leave it at that then. Good-bye, Perry; and . . . thanks for coming back to him. . . . Her voice shook badly, and he suddenly couldn't trust his own. They parted in silence."

"When she got back to her father, her white face and unhappy eyes told him that something had happened even before she broke out:

"Dad, he's gone. . . . He went yesterday, and Perry doesn't know where he's gone to, nor when he'll be back or anything. . . . Tears threatened but she forced them back. 'Oh, I knew I ought to have stayed with him that day,'" she cried out, after a moment. Sir John was startled. Jim had promised not to go away without letting him know."

"Somehow, he had thought that he would keep his word."

"He promised not to hide away. . . . Not to bolt, as he expressed it. . . . He won't. . . . He's gone down into Hertford. I knew there was some perfectly simple explanation."

"Bless you, Perry," she said, a shake of emotion in her voice. "Just stick to him."

"You can bet your life I will," he answered genuinely. She thanked him, and set down the receiver. Her hand was shaking, and hot tears were running down her face. As she turned away, she saw her father coming toward her with a letter in his hand."

"From Jim," he told her. "He doesn't give an address but tells me that if I want to know where he is I can find out from St. Abb. So you see, my dear, I was right. He hasn't . . . er . . . bolted."

"What has he written to you for?" she asked.

"About my taking over Linforths. He says that he is not going to have anything more to do with it, and is arranging to make over his control of it to me."

"Anything more?" asked Lucy, who did not find the question of business the most important one just at that moment.

"Only that he has gone away for a while, as he wants to think things over, and clear his mind as to his next steps. . . . He has suffered, Lucy."

"Yes," she broke out passionately, "and we went yachting, and let it happen!"

"She caught a breath. 'Dad,' she added suddenly, 'I'm going to him. I don't care if he said a hundred times over that he didn't want to see me. . . . I'm going to him. Now. This minute. . . . This is just breaking my heart. . . .'"

"She finished on a faltering, tearful note, that made Sir John say, after a moment:

"Very well, dear, if you think it best. . . . It is your affair very much more than it is mine."

"Less than fifteen minutes later, Lucy was in her little two-seater car, heading for the Hertfordshire house where her disastrous honeymoon had been spent. A suitcase, with a few necessities hurriedly thrown into it, was on the seat beside her; and, 'Daddy,' she had said, 'if he wants me to stay with him, I shall stay. . . .'"

"When she turned into the drive, her heart was beating almost hungrily fast. She pulled up at the steps, and ran up to the door. It was fastened."

"When she had rung the bell and stood waiting to be admitted, she felt that her heart must be going to suffocate her. The maid who opened the door was surprised to see her, but very welcoming."

"Is Mr. Lee in?" she asked quickly. "Yes, madam," the girl answered. "He's in the drawing room, I think."

"I'll go and tell him. . . ."

"No, I'll go myself. . . . Just see that the car is garaged, and my things taken to my room. . . . will you?"

"She gave the girl her hat and coat, and went along through the familiar hall to the drawing room, opened the door quietly, and went in. Lee was sitting by the fire, elbows on knees, his head in his hands. His attitude was one of deep dejection. The winter afternoon was already going dusky, and his head made a detail-less silhouette against the firelight."

"She closed the door softly, raised a hand to still the wildness of her heart, and said as steadily as she could:

"Jim. . . ."

"One word, but it brought him starting up to his feet, a smothered cry breaking from his lips."

"She came toward him slowly, half shyly; but at a closer sight of his face, pale and ravaged with the emotional turmoil he had gone through, her shyness dropped from her, and she saw something that the confusion of doubts and fears had obscured from her; something she had not been sure of, since she had last seen him. It was the look of a man who had been through a great deal."

"She asked softly, her lips curved to the tenderest imaginable smile. He stood motionless for the space of a breath, then turned away and put the length of the room between them before he faced her again and said:

"Yes."

"I love you, too," she answered. There was silence again. Then:

"I love you enough to know that I mustn't let you love me," he said.

"And I love you enough to know that you can't stop me," she said.

"He went on quickly:

"I've done some things that you could never really overlook. Never really forgive. . . . Looking back, it's like a dream, and a mighty bad one. . . . He drew a deep breath, and squared his shoulders slightly before going on: 'You may think that you would forgive them. . . . But I don't believe that you ever really could. . . .'"

"Suppose," she said, very quietly, "that I have, already?"

"Just for a fleeting moment, their eyes met across the room. Then she added: 'Or suppose, rather, that I realize that it has been a dream and a . . . Oh, a mighty bad one, Jim; but suppose I know that, being a dream, it therefore has nothing to do with real, waking life? Nothing, I mean, that could possibly come between your love for me and mine for you, if yours is anything like as big as mine. . . . Suppose I know all that? Doesn't it make a difference? Suppose I realize that it isn't a question of forgiveness at all, but just a recognition of something that has been and is past in difference? Doesn't it wipe out all question of whether I will, or won't forgive in the future?'"

"I told your father that I would do everything in my power to put things as right as they may be put, for you. . . . There is one thing I can give you."

"And that is?"

"Your freedom."

"Jim, do you really love me?" she asked, after a moment.

"And again he answered briefly: 'Yes.'"

"And yet you can offer me my freedom?"

"Oh, Lucy," he broke out: "I love you enough . . . even enough . . . to let you go!"

"Her voice came to him, very low and still, as she said:

"Jim, do you love me enough . . . even enough . . . to let me stay?"

"Stay," he said, shakily, "with me? After all that has happened?"

"Yes."

"Remember, I shall not be rich any more. . . . I am making over my

share in Linforths to your father."

"Then we won't be rich. We'll just be awfully happy, instead."

He laughed unsteadily.

"How could I let you? You who have lived in the middle of money all your life! To say nothing of having a mighty great heap of your own. . . ."

"I haven't got it now," she answered quickly. "I gave it to dad to help Gresham's along a bit, so you see I'm poor, too. . . ."

He uttered a cry as he turned on his heel and stared out of the window.

"So you did work against me, after all," he said slowly.

"Against you? No, dear. For you, I couldn't let you succeed. . . . Too ghastly a defeat, really. . . . Aren't you sure of that yourself?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it. I didn't know that it was your money. . . . Doesn't it set an insurmountable barrier between us?"

"Could mere money do such a thing? Could it be powerful enough? Besides, on the contrary, if you are going to be poor again, it makes us equal. . . ."

Without turning he said:

"You are breaking down all my resolutions. . . . I shall have no strength against you."

"You never should have strength against me, Jim."

The rebuke was very gently made. He turned and saw that her arms were stretched out toward him. . . .

He came plunging across the room to her, crying out:

"Lucy. . . . Lucy. . . . And was on his knees before her, his arms around her girlish slowness, clinging to her as a man might cling to his one hope of salvation."

"Is it true, Lucy?" he said presently, his voice very low and shaken. "True that you can love me after all I've done? True that you can let me love you. . . .?"

"There was never anything truer," she answered him.

"But I've been so unparadise to you. So brutal. I've even tried to cheapen your love. . . . Oh, Lucy, that night at Newchester will take a lot of forgetting!"

She raised a quick hand, and covered his mouth to stop the words.

"Jim, when did you know first that . . . well, that it was going to be awfully difficult to go on hating me. . . .?"

"Looking back, I don't believe I ever did hate you," he confessed. "It was always easy enough to take you in my arms; easy enough to kiss your lips. . . . Ah, God, how ashamed it makes me."

"Don't let it. Face it, as something that has been a . . . mighty bad dream, Jim; and then, cut it out and begin again from now. . . . But tell it all, so that everything is square."

"I know I was just sheer mad when you wouldn't come near me, those first few days. . . . I felt just utterly outcast, and yet fought against your power to make me feel so. . . . And when you told me to . . . give war to it. . . . He drew a breath, and added: 'You were thinking of Jocelyn, I suppose. . . .'"

"Yes, she told me that you had always loved her. . . ."

"And me, that you had gone to Ames! I can't tell you what that meant to me. . . . I stood it for two whole ghastly days. . . ."

"And then came to me. . . . Jim, I don't know whether to be angry with her, or thankful to her. . . ."

"She whispered, 'At least she showed me that you loved me. . . .'"

"Lucy," he said, out of a tiny silence. "He young again. Be that young, sweet thing that first put her hand into mine. . . . That angel thing I . . . I killed. . . . with the telling of those awful truths. . . . that first evening. . . . His voice was badly shaken."

"How can one ever make reparation," he cried.

"But that's all gone by, Jim. It's past and done with. Reparation? That is owing from both sides. Haven't we a big, big debt toward you? Such a debt as can never be paid, for we cannot bring back that lost three years. . . . Ah, darling, she broke off to raise her hands to his face and bring his lips to a level with her own. 'Let me pay back a little. Let me give you all I can, to wipe out the bitter memories. . . . If all the love of my heart, and all the loyalty of my life, can compensate a little, then let them, for they are utterly yours. . . .'"

Her voice died away tremulously.

"They are the only things that can," he answered her. "The only things that can. . . . And she found herself swept up close into his arms, his lips on hers. . . . There was a great thankfulness in her heart, a great peace in her soul. . . . Out of the darkness of vengeance she had found the light that a big love sheds. The past seemed to fall away, as she stood there, within the strong circle of his clinging arms, sheer away into the mists of things that are not true. Nightmare things, that love had sent scattering. . . ."

"I'm a free man at last, Lucy. . . . You have set me free. Free of this self of hate and vengeance. . . . My dear, there are more kinds of prison than one. . . ."

"But none that love cannot enter. . . . It is love that has set you free, Jim," she said softly.

"Love and you. . . . Do you think the two can ever be separated in my mind?"

Her face, close to his, she saw the white gleam of his smile; heard it, too, in his voice, and her spirits rose happily.

He looked at her with worshiping eyes. . . . Then raised his head suddenly and laughed; a ringing, triumphant sound:

"God's in his heaven. . . ."

She came to him, radiant in her happiness. "All's right with the world," she finished for him.

He caught her small hand closely in his big one.

"Rather a little girl. . . ."

bending his tall head to say it close to her ear. "Just rather a little girl."

[THE END.]

Woman's Great Service

No man ever lived a right life who had not been chastened by a woman's love, strengthened by her courage, and guided by her discretion.—Ruskin.

Who Was Who?

By Louise M. Comstock

STALKY & CO.

IF MASTER GIGADIBS, the well-known Beetle of "Stalky & Co.," seems discouragingly clever and unreasonably lucky in getting out of scrapes to modern little boys reading this children's classic, they have only to realize that the Beetle grew up to be none other than Rudyard Kipling to understand why. His two classmates in No. 5 Study, however, G. C. Beresford, the McTurk of the story, and Maj. Gen. Lionel C. Dunsterville, Stalky himself, both have testified that Kipling's picture of the youthful school days is a bit overdrawn.

Born in India, Kipling was sent to be educated to the United Services college at Westward Ho! in England. Here at the age of twelve the future author of "The Light That Failed" and the "Barrack Room Ballads" showed little of the talent in concocting real-boy escapades with which he later credits himself. Instead, he spent much of his time reading at a prodigious rate. Though the King of "Stalky and Co.," a Mr. Crofts in real life, predicted for this queer little boy an ignominious death "in an attic, a scurrious pamphleteer," others recognized his genius. Among these were the head master and the padre who gave him the run of their libraries, a very special privilege; McTurk, who describes him as a "sizzling, fizzling literary impulse with a small boy tacked on behind"; and Stalky, who finds promise in the youthful Kipling's contributions to the College Chronicle, of which he was also editor.

PET MARJORIE

"PET MARJORIE," Sir Walter Scott called her, little Marjorie Fleming who lived near him in Edinburgh, whose whimsical personality and astonishing literary career begun when she was six and ended by her death just before she was nine, won her unusual friends in her day and a peculiar sort of fame ever since. A statue to Pet Marjorie was set up just last year in her birthplace, Kircaldy, Scotland, and she is mentioned in the Dictionary of National Biography as one whose "life is probably the shortest to be recorded in these volumes, yet one of the most charming characters."

Marjorie Fleming was born in 1803. When she was just turning six the family moved to Edinburgh and Marjorie took up writing and commenced her famous friendship with Scott, part of the Waverley novels were written with Pet Marjorie on the author's knee. Sometimes she would amuse him by reciting long passages from Shakespeare; at others they would tramp together across the fields while Scott's dog Maida scampered joyously about them.

Marjorie has left us a number of letters recording her childish observations and philosophy, an epic in verse concerning Mary, Queen of Scots, whose royalty she upheld even while she condemned her morals, and a journal written between the ages of six and eight containing more observations on life and a number of poems, all of them recently republished for the modern reader. Pet Marjorie died of measles in 1811.

REBECCA

"HOW do you like your Rebecca?" wrote Sir Walter Scott to Washington Irving in the letter accompanying his gift of one of the first copies of "Ivanhoe" of the press. "Does the Rebecca I have pictured here compare well with the pattern given?"

"The pattern" from which Scott fashioned the handsome Jewess who figures so heroically in the familiar novel, was a real woman, Rebecca Gratz, whose lovely person and lovelier deeds were well known to early Philadelphians and whose grave may be seen today in the Mikve Israel cemetery on Spruce street. Here was a story of star-crossed love. Born of an aristocratic and influential Jewish family, well educated, a beauty, she was the center of one of the most distinguished social groups of the post-Revolutionary period. When she fell in love with a man of another faith than her own, she made a costly decision in favor of her family's religion, and devoted her life thereafter to philanthropy and deeds of goodness that doubly endeared her to all who knew her.

Thus, it was in the arms of Rebecca Gratz that died Matilda Hoffman, beloved of Washington Irving. On a subsequent visit to Scott in England Irving poured out his sorrow to Rebecca Gratz. All who know and love the Rebecca of "Ivanhoe" pay unconscious tribute to this heroic girl.

(© 1912, Western Newspaper Union.)

"Mammy Trees" Protected

Seed trees left by a large lumber company operating in Arkansas and Louisiana have been dubbed "mammy trees" by negro cutters, who zealously guard against cutting them down. Several large trees, previously marked with a distinguished white streak, are left on each acre to assure the seedling in of a new crop of young trees, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Medal Had Come Far

A copper medal struck in 1736 with the likeness of Andre Hercules de Fleury, French cardinal bishop and chief minister during the early part of the reign of Louis XV, was found in a well near Phoenix, Ariz.

Explaining the Planets

An Eighteenth century scientist explained the origin of the planets by saying that they were splashed out of the sun in a collision between the sun and a comet.

Orchardists Seek Eight Cost Cuts

Hope for 1932 Held Out to Fruit Growers of Illinois.

An eight-point program designed to help orchardists cut their production costs and get at least a small margin of profit in 1932 is being pushed throughout the state by the extension service of the Illinois College of Agriculture, University of Illinois. Thirty county schools are being held to acquaint fruit growers with the eight points.

They are: (1) Economical spraying; (2) tree thinning and culling; (3) gross pruning instead of detail pruning wherever possible; (4) less cultivation; (5) use of more horse power and less tractor power; (6) quantity buying of materials; (7) revaluation of investment to lessen overhead expense, and (8) repair, rather than replace machinery.

Many Illinois orchardists are planted too close, which makes the work in them expensive, according to R. S. Marsh, horticultural extension specialist of the college. Hence, the most timely thing that orchardists can do is the tree thinning and culling. Culling out unprofitable varieties or poorly located trees is just as necessary as removing the non-bearers from a poultry flock or the low-producing cows from the dairy herd.

"Trees are now living longer and developing larger tops as a result of better spraying methods and increased use of fertilizers. Hence, they should have more space and should not crowd each other. Where trees are planted on the square system, alternate diagonal rows can be removed with profit where they are too thick. A 20-by-20 foot orchard would be 28 by 28 after diagonal rows were removed, or a 30-by-30 orchard would be 42 by 42. Some new peach orchards are now planted 28 by 28, and the recommendation for apple trees has been 40 by 40 for the past 20 years."

"Several Illinois orchardists this year are thinning and culling trees, since last year's fruit prices and this year's prospects make it an easier job than when market prices are higher. Although this recommendation will reduce the acre yield temporarily, it will increase the yield for each man-hour, which is more economical at the present time."

Bindweed Always One of Hardest to Exterminate

The perennial bindweed is one of the most persistent weeds and it is very difficult to kill. If one attempts to kill it by hoeing every time it shows above ground one is usually tired of this before the weed is killed. Sodium chloride, however, works down into the plant, and will, no doubt, lengthen the period of new growths above ground. Thus, it will weaken, sooner, and if one sprays just as soon as it appears each time, one should be able to exterminate it. You might start with about four ounces of sodium chloride to a gallon of water, and spray this over about one hundred square feet of ground, thoroughly saturating the leaves. If you find this does not kill the leaves increase the strength until they are killed. While we have not heard of this weed being eradicated, altogether by spraying, it is worth trying. Potatoes could not grow so long as the spraying was continued.—Montreal Herald.

Terracing Made Easy

Terracing is such a simple, easy job that no farmer can afford to let his top soil wash away. Charles F. Holder, Grayson county, Texas, had lost most of the top strata of soil on one 15-acre field. There were ditches difficult to cross and others that could not be crossed. Fertilizer washed away before crops had an opportunity to utilize it. Mr. Holder decided to terrace. With a steel ditcher and four mules, he and a young son in five days built a series of four terraces totaling nearly a mile in length. The ditches no longer interfere, washing has been stopped and fertilizer remains on the field to be utilized by crops.—Capper's Farmer.

Live Stock on Feed

Cattle feeding in the corn belt states is 5 per cent less than a year ago, but 8 per cent greater in the states east of the Mississippi river. Nebraska has 20 per cent less cattle on feed than a year ago, while the feed lots of the western states show a decrease of 17 per cent.

There were 14 per cent more sheep on feed in the whole United States than a year ago. The corn belt states have a marked increase in sheep feeding and the western states also show a gain. Nebraska is feeding 800,000 head of sheep this year.—Nebraska Farmer.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa needs more lime than any other common forage crop. All soils in the East except those of limestone origin need lime for alfalfa, and even limestone soils, such as those in the Shenandoah valley, are often acid at the surface and need lime. The form of lime makes little difference provided it supplies enough calcium oxide. Soils that have not previously been limed will usually require at least one ton of burned lime or its equivalent to the acre.

Saltsick

According to a recent bulletin of the Florida experiment station, the condition in cattle known as "salt-sick" is due to deficiency of iron or iron and copper in the ration. It can be prevented by giving the cattle access to a mixture of 100 pounds common salt, 25 pounds red oxide of iron, and one pound of finely ground copper sulphate. According to the investigators, this trouble is the greatest single cause of loss to the cattle industry in Florida.

FEW FISH ESCAPE PURSUIT OF OTTER