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The Golden Girl

By AGNES LOUISE PROVOST AND LADBROKE BLACK continued

XXIV Beechwood was to be sold. Home of the Endicotts for upcounted generations, mellowed by time and hallowed by tradition, it was to go into alien hands, burdened, it was whispered, by mortgages which would leave little enough for a fast vanishing estate.

Meantime she sent a letter to Mr. Carver. It told him the things she had meant to say months ago.

He came by the next limited, but he did not go to the Granliden Apartments. He came instead to the Ritz and asked for Miss Staunton. There was a comforting firmness in the grip of his hand.

"However, that makes no difference. When you married you fulfilled the terms of the will. Your uncle could have gone further and made the terms more binding, but he did not. Now, what else?"

see the agent at once." At the door he turned again with a wise little nod. "Some day I hope you will both be there. He is a fine boy and very much in love, if my eyes are worth as much as I think they are."

Not all of Beechwood had been for sale. Originally a large tract the Beechwood lands still stretched back into acres of farm and wood and pasture land long held idle until it ended in an irregular strip not far from the village, with a bleak old mill, long abandoned, by the side of the cheerful little "river" that wandered through.

At Colon he announced his decision. You have been wonderfully good to me and I should be delighted to finish the cruise with you, but now that I am on my feet again I must get back home. There are things I must attend to there.

"I must, Frances. I have business to attend to." "It is that girl!" she said to herself resentfully. She thought of a charming apartment with the single word "Moreland" on the door.

Things could happen when she told Gorham of her discovery. She was ready to tell him now. Jack left them at Colon. Twenty-four hours later the Dickerson yacht, its cruise cut short, was steaming up the coast again, bound for New York.

Gloria met Sophie Daimler one afternoon and was borne off at once to the nearest place for tea. "Gloria, I haven't seen you for centuries! Where have you been?"

"Out of town a great deal." Gloria warmed under the impulsive greeting. She liked Sophie Daimler.

"I've so much to tell you." Sophie paused to give her order to the waiter and settled down to confidence. "Let me see, where shall we begin? I haven't seen you since the night of Amy's wedding. And things have happened so fast since that time. That dreadful murder—poor Miss Endicott, you know—and Jack Moreland's trouble. We were so shocked about it that we simply couldn't think of anything else for days."

"Yes, it was a terrible thing. But he is free now and I suppose he is much better." Gloria wondered if she was speaking naturally.

"Yes, he is free, but it was a dreadful ordeal for him. Bill saw him yesterday, and he says he isn't like himself at all, so quiet and reticent; almost morose." "Oh, he has returned?" Gloria could scarcely keep the relief from her voice.

"Yes, he came up from New Orleans by train instead of going on with the others, and he is at work already. We think it is much too soon, but he will do it. Poor Jack, I suppose he has to now. Father says the estate has simply fallen to pieces. He is with the Garrett-Hudson Motor Sales Company, selling cars. They have a big showroom, you know, and you go there to look at a car and they call 'our Mr. Moreland' to take you and show the car off and make the sale. It seems queer for a man like Jack; but you've met him, haven't you?"

"I met him at Beechwood when I was Miss Endicott's secretary. She was very devoted to him." In her own room, a little later Gloria feverishly searched the directories for the showroom of the Garrett-Hudson Motor Sales Company.

"That must be the place," she decided, and looked up at Cecile who was laying out her gown for the evening.

"I'm going to buy a car—to buy a car she sang to herself as she made ready to go. "And Jack will have to sell it to me!"

She went alone for obvious reasons, boarding a crowded bus as in the days of poverty, and getting off at the corner opposite the Garrett-Hudson showrooms. They faced on Broadway with a long expanse of window along the side street, where shining new cars were ranged. Across the radiator of a big limousine she had a glimpse of Jack, tall, graceful, thin, but bronzed with sea breezes, talking to another man.

When she entered he had disappeared.

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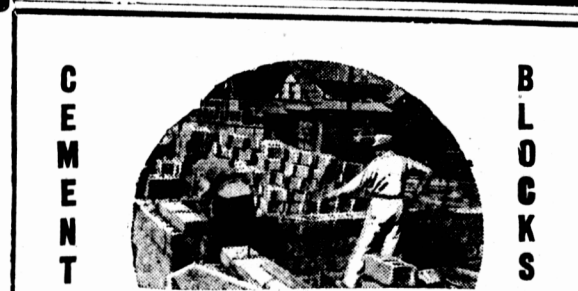
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