

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

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BY

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IN ADVANCE.

The India Shawl.

BY M. T. CALDER.

I HAD been entrusted with a lady's shopping errand, the execution of which led me through the fashionable promenade street of one of our Atlantic cities into quarters I rarely visit—one of the dry-goods palaces, where glowing velvets, glistening silks, or gossamer laces displayed on every side, dazzle and intoxicate the eye, until once beneath the spell, I no longer marvelled that the dainty pearl portemonnaies of our lady friends need such frequent and generous replenishing.

Feeling awkward and frightened amid the crowd of sweeping flounces and waving feathers, to say nothing of the bright eyes and curious glances of the fair purchasers about me, I sought out the senior partner of the firm, an old acquaintance of mine, and put into his hand the tiny bit of silk my careful Aunt Cynthia had so many times charged me to match, in just such a shade, and exactly that thickness, and precisely so many yards, begging him to extricate me from my dilemma.

He laughed a little at my woful face, but not heartily, and I saw some very important conversation was going on amid the rump of partners and clerks in the office, and begged him not to let me hinder him, as he was otherwise engaged.

"O, it is of no consequence, only a little talk we were having," he began, politely, and then suddenly pausing, he threw off the distant second-nature manner of the gentlemanly merchant, and slipped abruptly into his natural self. "I say, C., you are somewhat famous for your detective skill. I remember it now. Here's a case for you. We were keeping it private, but I should like to see what you can make of it."

He paused to call a clerk and despatch him with the shred of silk on my Aunt Cynthia's errand, and then drawing aside a couple of chairs, motioned me to take a seat. I did so, and he proceeded.

"We have been treated to quite a little one this morning. About eleven o'clock a very handsome coach drove up to the entrance of the store, and the footman assisted out a lady so elegantly dressed that half the clerks in the front of the store left their counters to get a peep at her. When she came in, she threw up a thread lace veil, and revealed a face, D., the junior partner, declares lovely enough for an hour, and asked for our cashmere India shawls. Of course she was waited upon in the most polite manner—leave D. alone for that! When a lady's pretty, he is extremely obliging; but wealth and beauty united can command any amount of obsequiousness.—I selected an \$800 camel's hair shawl, and out splendidly-chased portemonnaie filled up with rolls of bills, D. judged from furtive glance, and tendered him a one thousand dollar note. D. received it with prettiest bow, and came, according to positive rule, to the office to ascertain if it was genuine. We were quite busy then, and it was some time before its truth was decidedly established; but it was good, and D. carried back the two hundred dollars change. He found the la-

dy angrily snapping the gold-clasped portemonnaie, her splendid black eyes flashing as one might imagine of the daughters of Nox and Acheron.

"You have detained me unwarrantably," she said sharply to poor D. "Why have you kept me waiting?"

"I beg your pardon, madam, it took some time to examine the detective list and ascertain if the note was correct."

"You should have seen her eyes blaze then. D. said he dared not trust a second look, lest his own should be annihilated."

"Note correct!" gasped she. "How dare you insinuate so vile a slander! Do you think me a person capable of passing a spurious bill? Because my true position is unknown, am I to be thus insufferably treated? Hark you, sirah—your shop shall suffer for this. Not a purchase, the value of a sou, will I make again. Bring back my money and take your shawl. I'll have nothing to do with it!"

"Poor D. was in an agony of distress, believing her, at the very least, some great ladyship, whose violent anger and haughtiness arose from her ignorance of republican customs, and terrified at losing so grand and magnificent a customer, he apologized, and pleaded, and almost went down on his knees, but her ladyship was inflexible, and with a sigh, D came back for the note, and haughtily the queenly woman swept out from the store, D. still following and explaining. He was served rightly for his obsequiousness.

"I am extremely sorry,—not for the world would I have injured your feelings, madam. I was only following a rule of the store," he pleaded, for the fortieth time.

"Suddenly he turned around, and said, more mildly, 'Perhaps I should make allowance for the customs of this strange country. At all events, I won't punish myself for your fault. The shawl is the only one I have found that pleased me. There, bring it out to me?' and she threw towards him the bank note, and sank languidly upon the velvet cushions of the carriage.

"D. hurried in for the change and the shawl, determined she should have no fault to find with his nimbleness this time, and placing them on the carriage seat, closed the door, and bowed humbly, with a becoming sense of her great importance.

"There," said he, coming into the office with the note and laying it on the desk, "I flatter myself not many men could have managed that affair so nicely. I appeased her anger, and she took the shawl, so we have secured an excellent customer."

"Samson had taken up the note, Zounds and Blixen, D., it's a forgery!"

"It was true. She had exchanged notes. The genuine was still lying in her gold portemonnaie, and D. had received a counterfeit. It was almost worth the money for the rest of us to see D.'s face. He is a little important, and conceited about his business tact, but I don't think we shall hear much about it after this affair. He was so used up he had to go home, and I don't think we shall see him again to-day."

I laughed more heartily than he. "Cleverly done," said I, when the merchant had finished his narrative. "Depend upon it, her ladyship has served an apprenticeship at the trade, and come off mistress of the art."

"But can you help us? Do you think there is a chance for recovering the shawl or the thief?"

"Never try never win. You should try and trace the coach. Can D. identify it?"

"That's the worst of it. Every one was so taken up with the beautiful face and the glittering port-monnaie, that not a soul can tell anything about the coach."

"Well, if you obtain any clue, let me know it, and I'll see what can be discovered through it. Here comes my package. Good-morning!"

When I reached my office, I found my cousin Richard Ellis, one of our most fashionable jewellers, waiting there.

"Hang me if you haven't been out shop-

ping, you sly old bachelor!" said he, half laughing half scolding, in reply to my greeting, and glancing at the bundle in my hand. I've been waiting here an abominable long while, staring at the cobwebs and yawning over the directories. I have a job for you, and must talk fast now to make up for lost time. We have met with quite a little loss, but the most aggravating part is the way we were fooled out of it. Yesterday morning a richly dressed lady, of the most charming manners and extraordinary beauty, drove to the store, and descending from her coach, came in, inquiring for a set of diamonds. I went forward myself to attend her, and displayed our choicest sets, which she examined carefully, chatting in the meantime in a way that, without ostentation or pretence, convinced me that she was a person of great wealth and importance. She alluded to one set, remarking that it looked like the work of an old employee of hers in Paris, and actually named the very man from whose shop I had imported them.

"I was not an exile, then," she murmured, softly, apparently forgetful of my presence, a shade of grief stealing over her fine eyes.

"My respectful sympathy was at once aroused, and I even produced a choice set I had laid by for an especial customer, a splendid pattern in diamonds and sapphires. It struck her fancy immediately, and she purchased it for five hundred dollars, in pay for which she gave me a one thousand dollar note. (What are you laughing at?) I glanced at the bank note list, saw it was all right, and went to my safe for the five hundred dollars due her. Just then a footman came in and said something to her, which I did not hear. With a sweet smile of apology, she came toward me.

"I beg your pardon," said she "I am summoned to an appointment, and it is possible I may need that money. Bring the jewels to the—House," naming the first hotel in the city, "and I will pay you then for them. Ask for Madame Cheval, at 3 o'clock this afternoon."

"Of course I was ready to accede to the proposition. I returned her the note, and escorted her to the coach door. At three o'clock, married man that I am, I was dolt enough to take the jewel myself, to the hotel, instead of sending a clerk. I wanted another peep at Madame Cheval's charming face. I was shown into a splendid private parlor of the hotel, and found there the lady, even more elegantly attired than before. She received the case with a smile, remarking carelessly, 'I might have paid you then, as I did not use the money,' and handed me the note.

"I returned her five hundred dollars, and remained a few moments, talking about Parisian bijouterie, with which she seemed unusually familiar, and then made my adieu with the most profound respect and admiration. C., the witch, the mixx cheated me! Madame Cheval was a humbug, and this morning I found out my note was a counterfeit! I hurried to the hotel, but nothing could they tell me, except that such a lady had hired a private parlor for three hours, paid for it with a bill since pronounced counterfeit and left for parts unknown. Now, was there ever another such stupid fellow cheated in the way I have been?"

"Yes," answered I, laughing till my chair shook beneath me, "go and see poor D. I think you'll each enjoy a social confab to night. Well done, Madame Cheval—I shall really enjoy hunting up such a talented artiste!"

The city was flooded with counterfeits that week. The "beautiful richly dressed lady" had been in all directions, carrying away invariably the hearts of the shopmen and a roll of genuine bills for change. She had done a flourishing business during the three days we traced her about the city, but for all that, our investigations went no further. Not another sign or trace could we obtain, although half a dozen expert detectives were put upon the watch. So

we were obliged to wait quietly, expecting to hear of startling frauds of the same nature from other cities, and thus once more be on the track; the bird had flown. But weeks came and went, and no light broke upon us, till at length we had given up all hopes of success.

June was fast speeding away to make way for ardent July, when I received a letter from my niece, Allee Shaw, urging me to join a choice party on a three week's visit to Newport.

I was rather blue and worn out just then. A brief snatch back at youthful pleasures amid a group of youthful buoyant hearts would be delightful and invigorating. I decided at once to make one of the party; Accordingly, I was on board the Newport boat punctually, when it swung off from the wharf at New York, and descended to the ladies' cabin to find Allie, according to agreement. Two gay blue eyes were dancing a shower of welcoming glances towards me, at the moment I swung open the door, and a pair of tiny hands, daintily enclosed in lavender-colored gloves, caught mine enthusiastically.

"O, you dearest of old bachelors, I knew you would come! Now you shall be petted and caressed till you forget all about those musty folios and intricate law cases. But not a word must you breathe about returning until I am ready. Remember if you get unruly, I shall have the printed playcard, 'For Sale,' fastened to your back and bid you off, for some romantic philanthropic maiden lady to convert from heathenism!"

"I will try the petting first, if you please Allie. Where are your friends?"

"Out on the promenade deck. Come and see them."

And in a moment more I was in the midst of a general introduction. They were all, with the exception of Gerald Wayne, strangers to me. Every face was smiling, and youthful, and happy. It was reviving for me, fresh from the cankerous, perplexing cares of life, to gaze at them, although some were neither graceful nor beautiful. Every face smiling? No; there was one—I started when I beheld it, and hardly returned the salutation collectedly, when the magic name was pronounced, and the regal head bowed carelessly in greeting me, Lady Waldegrave's face was turned towards the water, with a wistful touching sadness, that a thousand fold enhanced its loveliness. Allee was a sweet pretty girl, the darling of her home now, and sometime to be the angel of another; Bell Richardson, as her name declared, a coquettish belle; Mary and Lizzie Vose passable, commonplace girls, owing a great deal of their attraction to their stylish dress and sprightly manners, while Nellie Barrett was unmistakably, unpretendingly plain. From out these, this Lady Waldegrave shone like the shone like the evening-star amid the fainter orbs of night a peerless magnificent woman. Descriptions are tedious, nevertheless I must give a few hints, that one may dimly picture this cynosure of all eyes on deck.

A tall slender figure swaying to and fro with willowy grace, clad in robes of exceeding richness, yet of the most subdued hue, a small head set rather laughingly upon gracefully sloping shoulders, thick wavy braids of jetty silkiness, parting away from a forehead smooth and fair, as if never a grief had rippled over the heart within, eyes large, lustrous, soft, tender and sad. Everything bewitching, melting, grieving, was expressed in those magnificent eyes. Never before or since have I seen orbs whose witching light could so enthrall and dazzle. A small mouth of vivid crimson, sweet and childlike in repose, arch and playful when parted to disclose the pearly line within, and features artistically small and delicate. Such is a poor glimpse of Lady Waldegrave. No wonder scarcely a gentleman on the deck could turn his eyes from the enchanting picture. Yet she sat bending her gaze wistfully upon the sparkling

water, as if entirely unconscious of the admiration she excited. I wondered if my little Allie had a misgiving when she saw how Gerald Wayne lingered by the stranger's side, and congratulated myself that I was a dry, musty old bachelor, supposed to be without a heart to lose.

We remained on deck until late into the moonlight night, and then separated reluctantly. Before morning we were safely landed on the shore, and once in Newport found lodgings already secured for our whole party, through Gerald's thoughtfulness. Then followed rare days, that almost reminded me of my youthful Utopian dreams of happiness. Pleasant strolls in the dewy morning, rare frolics in the tumbling surf, romantic drives in the still twilight dew upon the shell-strewn beach and silent walks under the solemn starlight with the eternal anthem of the sea sound in our ears. I enjoyed it with a keen relish I had never thought to know again, and so I thought did all, until I detected an increasing pallor on Allie's cheek, and an occasional quiver of her unusually silent lip.

So I looked around me for the cause, and once aroused, I wondered at my previous blindness. It was tacitly admitted by all our party to be nothing unusual to see every stranger, the moment he received an introduction, offer to Lady Waldegrave's rare loveliness the homage of undisguised admiration; but Gerald Wayne was bestowing something more. Heart, life, and soul were poured out in the passionate glances that followed her slightest movement; and now that my vigilance was awake, I fancied I could detect on her part an evident effort to please and attract him more than any other. I wondered a little at it. Gerald was a fine fellow, and in possession of a handsome property, but I never thought his talents remarkable. Certainly he did not seem to me such a man as a woman of Lady Waldegrave's position and attractions would consent to marry, even if she condescended at all to accept an untitled American. Lady Waldegrave and Gerald entirely absorbed in a game of chess, where the graceful movements of the ivory white arms, clasped by their heavy bracelets of gold, and shaded by a mist of floating lace, were a study of beauty in themselves, and I turned to Mary Vose, who was sitting by me trifling with her crochet needle and a web of crimson silk, saying, in a subdued voice:

"Who is this Lady Waldegrave?"

"E tu, Brute!" replied she, laughing lightly; "so you are going over likewise to the victorious side? Heigho! what's to become of the rest of us? I think I'll have a placard, to save me the trouble of answering so many times that one important question. Lady Waldegrave is an English woman a widow, who came over to America to see the country and search out a long absent friend. I think it must be Mr. Wayne—she gives him attention enough."

"She came in the steamer with you, Allie said, I believe?"

"Yes, from Halifax. She remained there over one steamer to search out any trace of her mysterious friend in those quarters. We became exceedingly interested in her, and invited her to go home with us which she did and will remain with us until her expected friends arrive from England, to join her on the tour through the States."

I had not been very attentive to Mary's remarks. I was watching poor Allie's strenuous efforts to answer Jack Vose coherently, and at the same time catch all the meaning smiles and significant gestures exchanged between the chess-players. I even saw the tear that was dashed so stealthily from the silken eyelash; and while I gazed, I was making a daring resolution. Concluded next week.

Mrs. Hugg, of Chicago, has applied for a divorce from Mr. Hugg. There was too much hugging done in the family by Mr. Hugg to suit Mrs. Hugg.