

THE EMERALD EARRINGS.

They lay on their white velvet bed the sunlight filtering through them, and changing their deep, rich green, that reminded me of mossy woodland nooks, into globules of golden light. A pair of emerald earrings, exquisitely set, and of handsome I had never seen. I was somewhat of a judge, too, for, in my young days, when fortune smiled on me, my very rare gems found a place in my jewelry case.

But those days were a part of the irrevocable past, and instead of living a gay life in a stately home, with an indulgent father to gratify every whim, I, Mildred Heath, was now a hard-working little teacher in a crowded city school. A study table, third floor back, Mrs. Wilson's shabby boarding house, I called "home." No one knew how I longed for some of the old pleasures to brighten the dull days that were now filled with monotonous labor; how I envied my young life as they rolled by in their carriage, laughing and chatting; nor how the florid windows tempted me with their wealth of beautiful blossoms, bringing to my mind so vividly the fragrant conservatories at my old home.

But after months of useless repining I had forced myself into a more contented frame of mind, and with peace with myself and the world, until one unlooked-for day, in hastening through a side street to reach home before a threatened storm, I suddenly stopped before a dingy pawnbroker's window, where, surrounded by odds and ends of all sorts, reposing the emerald earrings described in the beginning of my story. How they lighted up that dull window with their soft, shimmering radiance! And at first sight there came to me an overwhelming desire to possess them. All the restrained longing for that which was dainty, bright, and beautiful, broke forth ardent, and until the fast falling drops of rain reminded me that I was still some distance from home did I turn away from the window.

That night I dreamed I was teaching school in Africa, and the natives were pelting me with huge emeralds. The next morning I again turned into the little street to feast my eyes on the beauty of those jewels. The following day, before starting for school, I counted over my little hoard of savings. Twenty-five dollars.

"Oh, dear! that will never buy them," I said, dejectedly. Nevertheless, I tucked the money into my purse and hastened to school. Not until evening did I find myself free, and then I fairly flew into that little side street, holding my breath as I drew near the pawnbroker's window, for fear the white velvet case and its precious contents would be missing. But no emeralds were still there, looking, if possible, more beautiful than ever. And proving myself no exception to the old adage, "She who hesitates is lost," I quickly entered the shop and asked to see the earrings.

The proprietor, a greasy, unimpressive looking individual, placed them before me, expatiating on their beauty in his smooth, oily way. "What is the price of these?" I asked, breaking in on his volubility. "Thirty-five dollars, and cheap they are at that," said he.

"Yes, I know; but that is more than I can pay," I said, fidgeting, and scarcely able to restrain my tears. I turned away. "Wait a bit, miss, he called after me. "Now what will you give me for the gems?" "I have just \$25," I said, "and I really ought not to spend so much money for jewelry."

"But it is a great bargain," he said, hastily, and as he saw me put away my purse, he added, "Well, you take the emeralds, and I'll take the \$25. It is giving them away, really, but I have not many customers, in this quiet street, who would appreciate them," he added, in suave tones.

Eagerly I counted out the money, and slipping the case into my pocket, hurried home. Had I not been so delighted at getting my heart's desire, I might have thought it strange that the pawnbroker was so ready to part with his jewels for so much less than their value. But no such thoughts troubled me. That night I slept with the jewels beneath my pillow, and actually arose in the night and looked at the case to look at them, all of which was very childish, I know.

The next day was Saturday, and I had promised myself a treat, that of attending the flower show in progress at the Horticultural Hall. So at a cock I was on my way, attired in my best gown and hat, with the emeralds swinging bravely in my ears.

It was a beautiful morning; the sun shone brightly, the park seemed full of twittering birds as I passed through it, and the grass looked fresh and green after the soft spring rains. I was in excellent spirits at the prospect of spending a day among the flowers, of which I was passionately fond, and so a stupid child to correct, nor any dull, dry criticisms to hear.

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850,000. Have been sold to date. Persons desiring to examine or buy the most perfect machine will do well to communicate with the Agent for "THE WHITE" for Somerset County.

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