

HIS FLEETING IDEAL.

The Great Composite Novel.

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I.—FOUNDED AT LAST.

By W. H. BALLOU. Illustrated by FERNANDO MIRANDA.

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"Happy I may not call thee until I learn that thy life has been happily ended."

Thus soliloquized young Mr. Henry Henshall as he reclined, day dreaming, against the cushions of his seat in the forward section of a Wagner car.

The New York Central train was speeding him on and on, to which fact he was utterly oblivious.

He had secured the forward section to escape observation. He sat with his back to the passengers. Himself was companionship enough. He desired only to think and to dream.

He had but a few days since put Columbia college, so to speak, among his stock of reminiscences, with her highest honors in his trunk.

He had mentally given over his father's great manufacturing interests, which invited him to take immediate possession and give the aged sire his desired retirement, to the devil and the deep blue sea.

He loved his ideal best, his art next, the devil take what was hindmost. The ideal was now his quest; art he could achieve between times. It was of her he dreamed—his ideal.

As he sat there gazing at the end of the car, deep in the contemplation of this yet unseen but ever clearly outlined celestial ideal girl, with all the glamour of youth, the words of the great Solon to envious Croesus would thrust themselves across his thoughts and seize him like some grim specter. "Happy I may not call thee until I learn that thy life has been happily ended."

"Why need what old Solon or any one else ever said concern me?" he mused. "What difference does it make what people say or who says it? A fact is a fact, and a theory a theory. One man's theory is as good for his own purposes as another's theory. The fact in my case is that I am satisfied to paint, notwithstanding dad's wrath and the business he would thrust on me. Let dad earn the money, or who will—I desire only to spend it."

"So much for the fact. My theory is, and I prefer it to Solon's, that to marry my ideal will be the cause of happiness and will insure a happy ending to my life. If I never find her more or less of my life will be miserable and will end unhappily."

The young man failed to see that he had exactly conformed his theory to Solon's, that he had expressed the same theory precisely with variations in form only. Youth is deluded and ignores resemblances, those trifles which made Darwin immortal. He continued to muse:

"As an artist my preferences run to browns. They are my favorite colors, because to me they are most beautiful, most quiet, most sincere and the least suggestive of either gaudiness or gloom. My ideal, unseen, unknown love is a symphony in browns—brown hair, brown eyes and a complexion tinted brown rather than white or red."

"She is very small in stature, hence sure to be superbly perfect in form. Her little head is beautifully rounded and symmetrical, likewise her dimpled arm and her sweet little hands. Her little feet are incased in child's boots, not larger than a child's No. 12. She is—"

He paused abruptly, startled, for he saw her. His eye had been wandering among the gorgeous tapestries of the car, the beautifully wrought woodwork, the superb French plate glass panes in the windows, the oil painted ceilings and the blue and gold woven velvets of the cushions.

At last it rested on a mirror in front and above his head that slightly inclined from the top toward him sufficiently to expose the entire car and all its occupants in dim image, dim because his curtain was drawn, darkening the light from the window at his side.

He thought several times to change his position to obviate the annoyance, but he unconsciously seemed deterred from so doing. He was being slowly fascinated by a shadow as yet undefined, but momentarily growing more startling. He stared through the dim light at the mirror until his eyes became accustomed to the shadows above, and the picture among the other images gradually defined itself.

What he saw, that which would round and round him silken threads of fascination, might have been reflected through a dozen mirrors from side to side and from end to end of the car.

Suddenly he turned and attempted to discover the original among the passengers. Failing in this he again sought the mirror, giving himself entirely to the study of one dim outline.

What he saw was the head and bust of a young girl. It so exactly conformed to the ideal of which he had dreamed so long that he concluded the image must be a conception merely—a psychological ghost, as it were.

There was his dream face, surely; the sympathy in browns; the brown hair, every thread as delicate as the dew catching gauze of a spider; the large brown eyes, in which was the very soul of the loftiest conceivable intellect, the highest genius of music, perhaps; the complexion slightly tinted brown, but cut by the sweetest red lips; the evidently small stature and perfect form;

the beautifully rounded and symmetrical head and dimpled arm.

He only lacked a glimpse of the feet to complete the spell of fascination, except of course the realization of his absorbing desire—possession. He closed his eyes an instant to more completely imagine it all a dream. Again he looked to reveal in the picture, but madness—it was gone.

Startled, the young man turned in dismay, when, to his almost uncontrollable joy, the girl in all her ideal beauty slowly approached him in the aisle. His quick, artistic eye encompassed her form in a glance, completing the picture. She had exquisite feet incased in little boots not larger than a child's No. 12.

The girl hesitated, looking at him shyly, as if in doubt whether to proceed. Why, he could not for an instant imagine, but he afterward attributed it to the fact that he actually devoured her, so far as one can devour a girl with the eyes. Her hesitation was but momentary, then she approached a small silver water tank in the corner of the lobby near him.

He was on his feet in an instant. He sprang to the tank, his tall form bending until his eyes were on a level with her, and he gazed at her with that eagerness and intensity with which a starved nomad might look through a window on an epicure's dinner at Delmonico's.

"Permit me to assist you," he said gently, with difficulty controlling a desire to grasp her hand.

"Thanks, you are very kind," ventured the maiden, wondering at his eagerness and intensity of gaze.

He placed the silver goblet under the faucet, letting the liquid ooze out as slowly as possible while he continued his gaze like one in a dream of delight.

"The water is overflowing the goblet," suggested the girl with an amused smile.

The man awoke confusedly, turned the water off and handed to her the cup. "Couldn't you let it run over a little while?" he asked her impatiently. "The carpet will absorb it. I have been looking for you so long. I—"

"Oh, certainly, if you wish," she interrupted. "But then I am so thirsty, you know."



He stared through the dim light at the mirror.

"And so am I," the man said wearily. "I was never so thirsty in my life."

"Then I advise you to take a drink," retorted the girl with a laugh, and she abruptly turned and left him.

"It is not for water I am craving," murmured the wretched man; but if she heard him she gave no sign of it.

He watched her move down the aisle and enter the drawing room at the other end of the car. The reason of his inability to see her among the passengers was now evident. But how could her image be reflected in the mirror in front of him?

His eye caught a quick solution. The transom over the door of the drawing room was open. Some mirror on the inside reflected the images of the people to some mirror on the outside and thence into the one over his head.

Hungry and dissatisfied he seated himself again to contemplate the picture and scheme to get acquainted.

Now he recognized other people in the drawing room also reflected in the mirror.

There was an old man with a sober, dissatisfied face who looked as if he might be a disciple of Henry George deep in contemplation of land theories; a woman with a just then unreadable countenance, who might be the ideal's instructress in music or other studies, or her governess, perhaps; lastly, the face of a younger man, say of 35 years, that bore in it cunning, malice, snavity and other characteristics which denoted a shrewd schemer and perhaps a villainous nature.

Was she traveling in security with an aged, absorbed parent and trusted friends, or was her father, if such he be, oblivious to the machinations of a villain, who had an accomplice in the supposed governess?

He resolved to probe this mystery to the bottom, if he had to travel around the earth to do it—if he had to employ detectives, had to squander his whole fortune.

Poor man! He little knew how much of his contemplation was to be realized in his future existence.

Alarmed by the workings of his brain he suddenly resolved to paint the group as they appeared in the mirror.

He raised the curtain near him to increase the effect of the scene in the mirror, but it only dulled out the picture and he drew it down.

From his valise he took a palette, his paints and brushes and a small square of canvas with a heavy postboard back designed for use in the absence of an easel.

He began sketching on his ideal. It was a joyous task, so much so that his whole soul became concentrated in the work, and the lines in which he drew the lovely face rapidly grew into a facsimile of life.

Of course the best he could do during the remainder of the day was to prepare studies for more finished paintings later.

Still he lingered long and lovingly on the face of his ideal until the study, under the intensity of his love and longing, became not a bad picture.

The day gradually lengthened until he recognized that he must turn his attention to the others of the group or miss them by nightfall.

They might get off at some destination north of New York. He must hasten.

With feverish anxiety, intensified by the thought of her possible escape from him, he put away the paints and took to his pencil.

By nightfall he had sketched the group, so that all its characters might be recognized by the detectives whom he already purposed putting on the case if he should miss them.

Mr. Henshall concluded that in the dining car at dinner he should have the pleasure of sitting at the table next to the group. To his utter disappointment dinner was served to the party in the seclusion of the drawing room.

He entered the dining car on the last call and resorted to stimulants to urge his brain into some suggestion for his relief. He returned to his section and called the conductor, having evolved no other scheme.

"Can you tell me the names of the party in the drawing room and their destination?" he queried anxiously.

"I do not know their names," replied the official, "as the room was merely marked off to a party of four. However, I know that their destination is New York, and that they have transfer tickets either for some steamer or railroad. In case of the latter they should be bound southward; if abroad, their course is but a wild conjecture."

"Find out for me where they are going and I will pay you \$10."

"Very well, sir." But that was the last he saw of the conductor.

When darkness set in the brilliant electric lights of the Wagner palace increased the intensity of the picture in the mirror.

At last Henshall observed some movement in the drawing room.

The girl took a violin, and tuned it to suit her practised little ear. Soon there began to float through the car the ravishing arias of Chopin, Schumann and other masters.

If she was exquisitely beautiful to him before, what could describe her when pouring her very soul into music? It was then that the beautiful brown eyes vindicated his sense of the artistic and his love of their color.

In the mystic spell of that entrancing music he could see clearly through the perfection of her fingering, bowing, technique, finish and grace into her very soul, which was mirrored in her eyes.

He had listened to Ole Bull in times past, to Sembrich and even to Christine Nilsson when she had chosen to seize a violin and charm her friends; but in love as he was the music of the maiden for whom he was hungering seemed to pale the efforts of those great artists.

The very motion of the car was in harmony with her time. Passengers threw away their novels and listened. The old man in the drawing room closed his eyes as if in rapturous sleep.

The villainous looking man, as if fascinated, thrust his face as near to hers as he could without disturbing the player, and his looks showed passion, longing, and a malicious intent which maddened Henshall.

As suddenly as the music commenced it ceased. The girl arose and put away her violin softly and with a caress. Evidently she was tired and wished to seek her couch.

Had the young man heard what was said within, his anxiety would have been increased to a fever heat, but he had not that privilege, much to his later disadvantage.

Soon the lights within the drawing room went out; the group had retired.

Long in contemplation the young man sat. At last, merely to relieve the porter, all the remaining passengers being in bed, he betook himself to his couch.

It was hours before his tired brain would rest, and it was broad daylight before he awoke to violently spring to the floor and dress himself. The car was standing in the yards of the Grand Central depot. The berths were all made up, and the open doors of the drawing room showed that his bird had flown. He sought the porter in a rage.

"Where have they gone—the people in the drawing room?" he almost shouted.

"Don't know, sah. Don't know nothin' 'tall about it. Train get heah at 4 o'clock dis mornin'." De passengers get up when da pleased. "Specs de folks got up when da pleased."

Mr. Henshall sat down a moment to clear his brain. He was stunned.

Most of the night he had tossed in bed, hoping for an accident, a crash, a fire, anything, that he might spring to her rescue. Nothing of the kind had happened. Instead he had gone to sleep like a stone and let her escape.

It was now 10 o'clock. Six hours had elapsed, sufficient for the party to have escaped by European steamer or to the south, or worse, perhaps to their home in the vast city of New York, where one individual is a mere drop in the ocean, a grain of sand in the Sahara, a moth on a great seque of California.

The man arose and sought the quarters of the cabin. They could tell him nothing. No one had taken a party of four. They might have taken a street car or carriage of their own or walked to some near hotel, or worse, taken the elevated railway direct to the dock of some morning sailing steamer.

There was absolutely no hope. In despair the man wandered away, violently clutching his painted portraits, the only possible clew in the case.

II.—THE CUP THAT SLIPPED.

By ELLA WHEELER WILCOX. Illustrated by PHILIP G. OUSACHS.

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"I tell you, papa, I cannot endure his presence in this house. It was offensive enough to me at home, when he came but once or twice a day. It was still more so during our journey here, when I was forced to be in the same car with

him; but now that you tell me he is to live under the same roof, sit at the same table and ride in the same carriage with us it becomes unbearable. My hatred of the man increases hourly. Why need you compel me to associate with him so closely, papa?"

The voice of the speaker was of that peculiar contralto quality which in a refined woman denotes passion and force of character, and in an ordinary one a coarse order of strength.

It is a voice which always makes men turn to listen, and which echoes longer down the strings of memory than the most bird-like notes of more musical and higher keyed voices.

The face of the speaker betokened refinement, and this, together with her extreme youth and pronounced beauty, rendered the voice more remarkable.

The elderly man to whom the words were addressed breathed a deep sigh.

"My dear child, I beg you to be reasonable," he said gently. "You know how ill I have been—you know how alarming my condition seemed ever after—"

"Don't, papa," cried the young girl sharply. "Do you not suppose I remember as well as you the events which killed mamma, shattered your health and ruined my young life? Why recall them now?"

"Have we not come away to forget them, if possible, or at least to live down the effects? But I do not see how it will help us to have that odious man under the same roof with us day and night. Let Dr. Ren—"

"Watson," interrupted the old gentleman quickly. "I tell you, child, we must not forget the new names we have resolved to use. Remember always that I am Mr. Crawford, you are Miss Crawford, your governess is Mrs. Brown and your physician is Dr. Watson. It is imperative that we use these names among ourselves as well as in the presence of strangers."

The young girl threw out her arms with an expression at once impatient and despairing.

"I hate subterfuge and deception in every form," she cried, "and I have never seen why this change of names—which was a suggestion of Dr. Watson, as you call him—is necessary. In a city like New York or London or Paris, where we are to pass our time of exile, we could easily sink our identity without living under false names."

"The greatest city in the world is not large enough to hide the identity of a disgraced name," responded the old man bitterly.

"Disgraced? Papa!" exclaimed the young girl in a tone of expostulation, but the old man waved his hand wearily.

"Enough," he said. "Enough of this, my dear. The past is past. Why discuss it? The present and the future remain."

"I desire to regain my health and brain power, that I may set about clearing our name from the dark stain which has fallen upon it. I do it more for your sake than my own, as at longest my stay on earth will be brief; but before I go I would lift this shadow from your young heart."

"Dr. Watson, as you well know, is the first of many physicians who gave me any relief from my suffering. He was the last one to be called by me, because, like yourself, I had conceived a most unreasonable prejudice against the man. Some foolish and idle gossip concerning his private life, which arose from pure envy, I am now convinced, had warped my judgment. But from the hour he first took hold of my case I have been a new man. I have been like one risen from the grave."

"It was he who discovered that old associations were affecting my mind dangerously. It was he who suggested a journey abroad, and, as you say, under assumed names. A disgraced name is like a deceased member of the body. If you have a wounded finger you are in constant fear of hurting it, awake or asleep. If you bear a stained name you meet Dr. Watson realized what this strain would be upon me during our journey, and I must confess the relief I find under my alias is marvelous. You know how I have improved. The chill with which I was attacked the morning of our arrival, and which decided us to remain here a few months before proceeding farther, is only a step down on the ladder of health since I began to clamber up out of the valley of death. Dr. Watson is my savior."

"I beg you to overcome your unreasonable prejudice against him, my dear child. Whatever the errors of his youth I am convinced he was more sinned against than sinning. He is your poor father's best friend now, and as such you must consider him."

"But why need he live here with us? Why can he not take a room a few blocks distant, within easy call?" persisted the young girl. "It destroys the privacy of our home life—and it destroys my peace of soul," she added wildly, "to have him here."

"That is the extravagant language of youth," rejoined the old man. "Your prejudice is unreasonable, but I will strive to keep Dr. Watson from annoying you with attentions which he intends only as courtesies to the daughter of his patient."

"He must remain under this roof. His presence is as agreeable and beneficial to me as it seems to be unpleasant to you. In this matter selfishness is the greatest unselfishness on my part, for the restoration of my health is the first consideration for your future happiness."

The sound of a key rattling in the lock, like a rat gnawing in the wainscot, put an end to further conversation, and the door swung open to admit a medium sized man in his middle thirties, whose glittering, sloe black eyes rested upon the face of the young lady while his words were addressed to her father.

The lips expressed kind consideration for the invalid, while the eyes expressed insolent and assured triumph in a fixed purpose.

While he talked with his patient he kept his gaze upon the girl's face.

She sought to avoid those glittering eyes, but they seemed to fill the room with strange light.

She took a bit of sewing in her hand and turned her back upon him, ostensibly to catch the receding rays of the afternoon sun from the northern window; but she spoke her name, and for some reason unaccountable to herself she turned toward him, drawn like the needle to the magnet.

"Papa, I feel the need of the air. I am going out with Miss—Miss Brown for a little walk," she said, rising abruptly.



"Papa, I feel the need of the air."

"I have ordered the carriage to be here in fifteen minutes. Wait and ride," said Dr. Watson.

"I prefer to walk," she answered coldly.

"And I wish you to ride," he said quietly.

Again her eyes were drawn to his and she sat down obediently.

As they took their places in the carriage Dr. Watson seated himself opposite Miss Crawford and by the side of her father.

The drive lasted two hours. It was dark when they returned, and Miss Brown was startled to hear her young mistress cry out wildly as the door of their room closed upon them, "I shall certainly, certainly go mad!" and then to see her fall in a dead swoon upon the floor.

After she was restored to consciousness and tucked into bed with Miss Brown to watch beside her, the old gentleman spoke confidentially to Dr. Watson.

"I think you will have to avoid showing any attention to my daughter for a time," he said, "as she has conceived some foolish prejudice against you. It is the whim of a mere child, and I trust you will regard it lightly, but I am convinced by her manner during the drive this afternoon, and by her swoon, that she is considerably excited over this matter."

"You have been very courteous and kindly attentive to her, as it is your nature to be, I am sure, toward all her sex. But I think it would be wise to take no further notice of her for some time to come—until she outgrows this whim of hers."

Dr. Watson leaned near the old gentleman and laid one hand on his shoulder, and spoke in a low, grave voice.

"My dear friend, I do not wish to alarm you," he said. "Yes, I have been studying your daughter's mental condition ever since I first entered your service. She has a most remarkably sensitive nervous organization, and it has been greatly shocked by events to which I need not refer. Unless she receives medical attention I fear for her."

"I beg you to leave her care entirely to me. Miss Brown understands her condition, and we have both wished to conceal the danger from you, but since you have spoken it is better that you know the facts. Ignore any whim the child may have; pacify her as best you may for the time being, and leave the result with me. You shall not regret it."

The old man pressed the doctor's hand and tears came to his eyes.

"Nor shall you ever regret your interest in me and mine," he said. "Thank God, I have money enough to pay you for this sacrifice of your whole time and skill in my service while I live, and you shall not be forgotten when I die."

The eyes of the doctor glowed like coals of fire as he bade his patient good night and stepped out into the hall.

At the door of her mistress's room Miss Brown stood waiting for him, fear in her eyes. He put his finger to his lip.

"Do not be alarmed," he whispered. "The swoon was nothing. It may occur again. Keep cool always, and remember our compact in the Wagner car, when you promised to aid me. You shall be well paid for it."

And he slipped a crisp bank note into her willing hand. She bowed her head.

"To-night, at 1 o'clock," he continued, "if your young mistress takes her violin and plays an air from 'Faust,' do not speak to her or disturb her. Let her follow her own will. It may not happen, and yet such an event is liable to occur."

He passed on to his room, and Miss Brown entered the apartment which she occupied with her young mistress, who was now sunk in a profound slumber.

An hour and a half after midnight the sweet strains of a violin breathing an air from 'Faust' floated through the apartment house.

A woman who lived across the hall heard it, and remarked to her husband that if ever a set of cranks lived on earth it was the people opposite.

Dr. Watson heard the music and laughed softly in his room, while his eyes glowed like coals of fire.

Miss Brown both saw the player and heard her music and muttered with pale lips, "Is he man or devil?"

Just a month later, a man who had been sitting in Chickering hall watching the exhibition of Professor Oscar Feldman, the hypnotist and mind reader, rose and walked out before the close of the entertainment.

A young man sitting near the aisle glanced up at him, slightly annoyed at the disturbance caused by his exit.

"I have seen that face before," he thought, as the man passed on.

The exhibition grew in interest and the young man turned his attention to the stage; but the face of the person who had just gone out danced before him in

irritating suggestiveness, just ending the grasp of his tantalized memory. "Where did I see him before?" he thought, and then, like a mirage, the scene reflected in the mirror of the Wagner drawing room car two months previous flashed before the mind's eye of Harry Henshall.

He arose and dashed out of the hall. In the crowds of people hurrying to and fro in every direction it was impossible to tell whether the man had gone.

He hailed a cab, hurried to his studio, made a careful sketch of the face he had just seen, and carried it to the private detective who was renowned for his skill.

"This man I saw go out of Chickering hall half an hour ago," he said. "Find his address for me and I will pay your price."

It was a few days over a month later when he received a telegram in Boston, whither he had gone the day previous, which said:

"Have found name and number. Come home."

He was the original of this sketch day before yesterday, driving in a carriage, explained the detective on Henshall's arrival. "I followed and saw him enter No. 3—West Thirty-eighth street. I then followed the driver to the stables, and learned that the carriage had been rented some three months before by a family named Crawford, of the number and street I mentioned."

When Mr. Henry Henshall presented himself before the janitor of No. 3—West Thirty-eighth street to make inquiries concerning a family named Crawford, he was informed that they took their departure early that morning and left no address.

"They leased those furnished apartments for three months," the janitor explained, "and the time would not expire until next week some time, but they left today."

"Perhaps they gave their address to some of the other occupants of the building," suggested Mr. Henshall. "May I inquire?"

But the inquiries elicited nothing from the other people in the house.

No one had ever exchanged a word with the family. The woman opposite volunteered the opinion that they were a set of cranks, and no better than they ought to be, in her opinion.

"A rich old man, a queer woman, a fellow with an evil eye and a crazy girl who played the fiddle at o'clock at night were not pleasant sort of folks to live opposite," she said, and she was glad enough they had gone, and she had no desire to know where they were.

With these words she slammed the door in Mr. Henshall's eager face.

That evening a woman whose garments bore the same relation to past elegance that her face bore to past beauty called on the janitor of No. 3—West Thirty-eighth street to make inquiries concerning a man by the name of Dr. Henshall.

"No such man livin' here, miss," replied the janitor, with that air of importance peculiar to the freedom of one who feels the newness and greatness of responsible duties. "The only doctor ever bin rum' yeah in my day is Dr. Watson, and he's dun gone today."

"Did he go alone?" asked the lady quickly.

"No, the whole family dun gone, too—Mister Crawford, Miss Crawford and Miss Brown."

A steel blue light flashed from the once beautiful eyes of the faded blonde.

"And he left no address?" she asked quietly.

"Not any, miss. Gen'm here today lookin' for the same parties, but nobody knows nothin' about them."

The lady turned and walked away.

"Very well, Dr. Watson," she muttered under her breath, "I shall know who to search for now, and if you are on this earth my vengeance will yet find you."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

HORSEMEN

ALL KNOW THAT

Wise's Harness Store

Is still here and doing business on the same old principle of good goods and low prices.



"I wish I had one."

HORSE GOODS.

Blankets, Buffalo Robes, Harness, and in fact everything needed by Horsemen.