

HIS FLEETING IDEAL

The Great Composite Novel.

THE JOINT WORK OF W. H. Ballou, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Maj. Alfred C. Calhoun, Alan Dale, Howe & Hummel, Pauline Hall, Inspector Byrnes, John L. Sullivan, Nell Nelson, Mary Eastlake, F. T. Barnum, Bill Nye.

To Be Concluded Next Week.

VII—ONE THREAD BREAKS

By INSPECTOR BYRNES. Illustrated by REGINALD T. SPERRY.

Copyright. All rights reserved. Henshall did not know whether to laugh or to swear when he reflected on the way in which he had been played by the singer.



"I am not the man, I swear to you."

The interest which he had felt in this girl, who represented to him so fully his ideal, was quickened tenfold by the late occurrence.

"Yet I had only seen her once," he said to himself, as if to defend the absurd thought that she would feel any deep interest in him.

"The thought that he and the girl he was beginning to feel such an interest in could be swayed by a common sympathetic feeling was pleasant to him, but when he reflected that it was the odious doctor who had apparently entwined both their souls by some occult magnetism he was indignant.

"He doesn't come on till 6 this evening," was the answer.

"Well, you can take me to Miss Dudley's," he said impatiently at a venture.

"Where is the man who was on duty last night at 11 o'clock?" he inquired.

"What do you want to see her for?" said the young woman.

"It is on a matter of private business," he replied.

"The lady's face was not at all encouraging as she replied, 'I do not know it.'"

"Have you any objections to telling me why you and Miss Neville exchanged dresses last night and why you led me on such a wild goose chase?"

"I had the pleasure of rescuing her from a man who was annoying her with his attentions only last evening. I feel sure that it was the wish to escape him that led her to propose this extraordinary change of dress.

VIII—COLLISIONS AND COLLISIONS

By NELL NELSON Illustrated by Mrs. JESSIE CURTIS SHEPARD.

Copyright. All rights reserved. "Oh! how good the fire feels," said Miss Brown, as she rolled over on the soft Persian rug and presented her left shoulder to the open grate.

"She lay with her elbows on the floor, her chin in her hands and her feet crossed, putting like some re-energized cat as she toasted herself a bright scarlet."

"Coffee is the best thing that ever went down a human throat. I know of no sensation to compare with a hot bath, which is a purification, a solace and a benediction, while a grate fire, with a soft rug to lie on, is company, comfort and consolation. There's history in the burning coals, and there must be inspiration, only I haven't brains enough to perceive it."

"The present lies in the white heat. There's that Doctor of Devils grinning at me; there's poor little Edna; there's the crazy painter, and leaning against the brick is Mr. Crawford, scarcely able to support himself."

"Not a sound was made nor a syllable uttered, but Miss Brown felt the presence of the hypnotist in an instant."

"The air was redolent with the breath of roses, and up from an arbor of palm and oleander floated the light strains of mandolins, flutes and harp, rapturous as love itself."



"You have said it, my dear Martha."

"Miss Brown rose to a sitting posture, straightened out her skirts, threw one corner of the fine rug over her feet and knees, and lying down again turned her eyes to the fire and covered her face with her arm to shut out the demon gaze that made her soul writhe."

"Without heeding her silence Watson blew out some delicate rings of smoke."

"I wish you were not so prudish," he said. "I like the lace ruffles of your skirt better than that rug. They remind me of the girl I married in Chicago."

"That was your third wife, wasn't it?" she said venomously.

"Well, really, Mattie, to tell you the truth, I don't remember her number, but now that you betray some evidence of rationalism, I have a little matter to talk about that will interest you."

"Your transient mistress has gone west, and to-morrow, if possible, we will take the same route. I have given old Mortal ten powder to make him sleep for the next fifteen hours, and if you have any packing to do you needn't be afraid of his tugging him. You have been a very useful assistant, Martha, and you can make yourself indispensable to me now if you want to."

"Miss Brown slowly raised herself, rubbed her eyes with both hands, and without looking at him asked, 'In what way?'"

was conscious of it, for she raised her left hand to brush it away, and as she did so gasped, 'Yes,' and tore away the lace from her throat."

"Now you are reasonable. Sit down and listen to me. Tell Mr. Crawford in the morning that you had a dream, that you saw Edna on a sick bed, neglected and alone. Tell him you saw her mother—'What the devil ails you?'"

"I know what to tell him," and she buried her face in her hands as if to shut out a vision too horrible to contemplate."

"I am willing and all that, Dr. Watson, but I know I can't help you and it's no use sending me. Miss Edna does not trust me. She dreads me and I fear her. I can't look into her face, and I have not been able to meet her eyes since the night I made her mother see your vinaigrette."

"Asleep or awake it's all the same, and the older the daughter grows the stronger becomes the resemblance to her mother. It is wasted time; I can't stay with her or near her, and I won't try. I will go to California in the letter if that will do you any good, but there isn't money enough in America to keep me in her service."

"Does it occur to you that I have evidence sufficient to convict you of murder?" "Who ever heard of an accomplice hanging and an adept scoundrel who has won success as thief, bigamist, forger and blackmailer escaping judgment? There was profit in Mrs. Crawford's death, and you know who got her fortune and what became of her property."

"Hold your tongue, you jade. Your wages will depend upon the success of your dream to-morrow morning. We give up these quarters this week without fail, and on second thought it will be better to have you travel with us as nurse or companion, or secretary to Mr. Crawford."

"To save you the trouble of planning an escape I might as well tell you that I have paid a private detective to watch you, and that I am determined to have your assistance. So good night, dear. Get as much rest as you can, for it's a long, weary run from here to Frisco."

Banker Hartman's house in Stuyvesant square was as gay as a palace for a coronation. Incandescent lanterns hung in the branches of the trees flooded the scene below with soft light, and wove a delicate tapestry of skeleton leaves and graceful branches over pavement, street and wall. From curbstones to doorstep stretched carpet and canopy, one hung with little chamber lanterns, from the jewels of which the light streamed in soft splendor, and the other bedecked with date and fan palms."

"White liveried groomsmen stood at the carriage step to assist the wedding guests, and in the vestibule and along the staircase were servants of inscrutable face and faultless dress, each with a single phrase to deliver by way of direction to the bewildered company."

"The air was redolent with the breath of roses, and up from an arbor of palm and oleander floated the light strains of mandolins, flutes and harp, rapturous as love itself."

"The above of the music room had been turned into a nuptial bower. An umbrella of white burlap roofed the inclosure, and the walls were draped with pink roses, and just within the floral gateway stood a prie-dieu of carved ivory, gilded with gold, where Henry Henshall would kneel with his bride to receive the nuptial benediction."

"Up in one of the sumptuously appointed guest chambers sat the painter in the attitude of a penitent, desolate as a light house, for he had locked the door and given orders not to be disturbed. The marriage was set for 7 o'clock, and the neighborhood abounded in befrifed clocks. He had his gloves on and the ring in his pocket and he was listening for the knell."

"Confound it, why should I care?" he muttered, rising abruptly and beginning to pace the floor. "It's the woman in me. Men marry nurses and housekeepers and influence every day in the week, and I can name at least five fellows in the club who have married for mere social position. This thing of love is an involuntary sort of a sensation, any way, and as for swearing to keep it up, it's all bald-headed, for a fellow can no more hate all his life than he can love. I'm in love with that small, brown-eyed musician, yet I wouldn't marry her if I could, but I mean to find her and know her and use her as an ideal, if I have to sell my immortal soul."

"Lena is a good, wholesome girl, ample in everything but imagination, amiable and lenient, and she loves me, poor child, with her whole soul. Ah, well, the least I can do is to treat her decently. And I wish to gracious this ordeal was over with."

"My idea in hurrying the thing was to escape the gaping mob, and the servant at the door told me he had counted one hundred and twenty. I never could understand the whims of woman and her aversion to quiet weddings."

to stand the leader of the orchestra for the march. "Ah, old man, glad to see you! How are your knees? Shall I get you a drink of something?"

"No, thank you, I'm all right. Where's Lena?" "Dear Henry, how do I look? Is my veil straight? I'm awfully nervous. Are you?"

The pale-faced bridegroom was spared the effort of response by a burst of melody that came from the fifty strings hidden away in some place overhead, and offering his arm to the goddess in satin and pearls, he led her down the broad staircase, along the rose trellised hall, through the orchid-scented drawing room and into the floor below."

In the gateway stood the venerable clergyman, book in hand, straight as a sentinel and bright as a January rose. The sweet strains of "Oberon" came from the pleading, sobbing violins.

In six minutes by the watch of Broker Henshall his son was a husband, and at 6 o'clock the following evening Mr. and Mrs. Henry Henshall, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Crawford, Dr. Watson and Miss Brown were in the Union depot of Chicago, waiting for the San Francisco limited.

IX—EXPEDIENTS OF DESPAIR. By MARY EASTLAKE. Illustrated by MISS E. L. SYLVESTER.

Copyright. All rights reserved. It is the nature of a man to pursue. He regards the whole world as a hunting ground, and anything that pleases his fancy, whether it be a bird, a pretty woman or a brute, as his lawful prey.

He may not care for the game or know why he pursues it, but the chase is irresistible, and like the child with the butterfly, he will spoil his pretty clothes, stub his toe and get his feet wet running through brambles and puddles as long as the winged thing is in sight."

If woman only knew it she could win her lover by eluding him, for man ever wants what he can't get easily, and prizes most the fruit that hangs highest. To him beauty is so entrancing as that which smiles and blushes beneath the mystic web of a gauzed veil, and doubly lovely is the loveliness that turns and flies at his approach."

Henshall knew neither rest nor peace of mind. The throbbing, sobbing notes of Edna's violin were as sweet to him as the music of the rolling spheres to the old philosopher."

He had eyes for nothing but the soft brows of her hair, lashes, complexion and dress. He thought of her through the day and dreamed of her in the night, and could they have been vocalized every sigh would have uttered, 'I will find her.'"

And as he followed this small woman with his thoughts and his soul his bride Lena first became moody, then tearful, and finally so despondent that she threw herself in the arms of her companion and begged her to tell her what to do."

There was not any too much nectar in the make-up of Mrs. Smith, and no danger of her sharpening the edge of Mrs. Henshall's sensibilities. Instead of putting her arm about his neck, and electrifying her medulla spinalis with the magic of her touch, she took a hairpin from her coiffure and proceeded to loosen the cuticle about the girl's finger nails."

"And so you are disappointed with married life already? Well, my dear, you have only made the common error of expecting too much. You have foolishly invested the field of wedlock with the colour de rose, and studied your hero with the magnifying lens when you should have reversed the glass."

"Now let me advise you not to be unreasonable; don't tell me you expected to marry an angel. You are a mortal and married to a man, one of the queerest brutes that tread the earth. Yes, men are queer brutes," she repeated, crossing her eyes in fury; "enthusiastic and deferential enough before marriage, but an entirely different sort of breed afterward."

"But Henry isn't, he's the same now that he was a year ago. He scarcely notices me, and never speaks unless I ask him a question. There's something on his mind. It isn't his work, for he hasn't finished a canvas this long time, and it isn't I, that's certain."

the hotel. He had smoked, walked and driven with him, and at a last resort to win his confidence begged the impresario to sit for a portrait.

"Now, I would like very much to have you and Mrs. Henshall meet my little star, but I have nothing to say about it. It rests entirely with her, and she has positively refused to make any acquaintances. These professional women, you know, have to be humored, but Miss Neville, I am convinced, has a reason for wishing to avoid people, and as she is not well, I feel compelled to respect her wishes."

Henshall was pretending to portray the musician one morning when this conversation took place, and at this rebuff his brows knitted, his heart sank and his brush fell from his hand.

"Well, of course, Herr Opper. I don't wish to seem impertinent, but I met Miss Neville several times in New York."

"You did?" interjected the musician. "That is, I saw her—heard her play, and I have seen her every night during this engagement. My reason for asking to be presented is that I wish to make a picture of her for the next Academy. She is the most beautiful creature I have ever dreamed of, and if I could only paint her I believe the picture would make me famous."

The model, who was playfully dovetailing his fingers, offering no answer further than a mild indorsement of the compliment to the girl's beauty, it suddenly occurred to Henry that it might be policy to get the assistance of Lena, and excusing himself he went to call her.

"While he was away Opper got up to stretch his legs, and in the circuit of the improvised studio came upon a small folio, which curiously opened revealed a sketch done on a business card that fairly took his breath away."

"Miss Neville!" he muttered to himself. "Then this is the villain she has been trying to avoid ever since we left New York! My God! I have been telling him about her. Another! Three! Two more! As I live, there is nothing else. And I was seriously thinking to have this man paint her from life. Well, well, well, this is great luck. I must go; this is something remarkable!"

A few moments later, when Henshall returned with his wife to propose an invitation for a supper party, he was surprised to find the room vacant.

There was no sign of Herr Opper in the hall, and as the elevator was at the bottom of the shaft he wisely concluded that his visitor had gone. The next thing was to send a playfully petulant note after him by messenger, and urge the importance of an early sitting for the next morning. The reply dumfounded him.

Herr Opper would not be able to keep the appointment nor make another until his return to New York.

At the concert that night the manager could not be seen, and when he had been repulsed a third time Henry fell to thinking with such fierce energy that he did not notice the burly detective in evening dress who followed him into the hall and occupied the seat adjoining his.

When Dr. Watson reached Chicago and came face to face with his wife and his antagonist he was momentarily stunned. "Curse the luck!" he thought to himself. "There are four sleepers in the train, but only one dining car, and no matter how I calculated it would be awkward. There's no use figuring. I can't do it." And he instantly became sollicitous for his patient.

"My dear sir, what is it? Speak," putting one hand on the old man's shoulder and taking his pulse with the other. "You're pale, your eyes are glassy and you're chilled. Forgive me, dear Mr. Crawford, the run from New York has been too much for you. We should have laid off at Detroit. But we'll make amends here."

And before the astonished old gentleman could recover his senses at this unexpected burst of interest Dr. Watson signalled a porter to conduct him to the waiting room while he went to overtake Miss Brown, who had already arranged her section for the journey.

"My dear," he said, taking her by the arm, "I've changed my mind; come out on the platform. I want to speak to you," anxious to avoid the possible recognition of his wife. "Mr. Crawford has not well, and I have decided to stay over until to-morrow, but you can go alone. Here's the letter and the tickets, and here's some money for your expenses."



"And so you are disappointed with married life already?"

"Now, Lena, don't be foolish. You get as much petting as the average woman has a right to expect."

"Right? Am I not married to him, his lawful wife, and shouldn't I expect some evidence of his affection?"

"No, expect nothing. You can drive a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Let him get thirsty, let him alone."

"But I don't want to let him alone." "And there's just where you make a mistake. When you get your third husband you'll know how to manage him. The trouble with you is this, you have too many feelings and too much heart. It is a bother to have feelings, and my advice is to get rid of your heart if you want to have good digestion and keep your youth."

"A woman with a heart is in the power of her husband; a wife who has none can do as she pleases. Take all giving nothing in return—that's the true philosophy of matrimonial peace if you needn't hunt for happiness, for it is not to be found on this planet in quantities to speak about."

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