

An Evening's Enchantress

By Lucie Wells Smith.

It was during a Damrosch engagement in Chicago that I happened to go to the theatre one evening. I was alone, as my wife had not been going out since the death of a relative. The audience was a music-loving one, and during the third act as I strolled into the foyer I found it quite deserted, a most unusual occurrence.

Wagner grows noisy to an uncivilized ear after listening an hour or so, and the strains that came through the heavy, closed doors were more agreeable to mine. I was about to return to my seat, however, when I noticed a remarkably handsome woman emerge from the curtained door that led into the lower boxes.

She was unusually beautiful, of that flashing combination of dark eyes and golden hair that is so rare.

She was fashionably dressed, and under her opera cloak I saw the glimmer of jewels. I expected her to sweep out to her carriage, instead of which she stopped in front of me and began to look anxiously toward the outside door. Then she stepped back into the curtain, but almost immediately returned, and began to pace up and down more anxiously than before.

She was evidently looking for someone whose delay caused unusual alarm. Once I thought she started toward me as if she was going to speak. I thought I noticed this movement again when I involuntarily approached her.

"Can I be of any service to you, madam?" I asked in a most deferential tone, which her bearing seemed to demand.

She paused doubtfully a half second, then graciously explained:

Her father had left her at the theatre, expecting to return immediately; he had failed to do so and she was extremely alarmed on his account, and was also embarrassed at finding herself alone in a strange city at midnight. In fact there was nothing else for me to do but to offer to see her home. It was all arranged in a few seconds, and under the charm of a woman who was of no ordinary type. She gave the directions to the driver. I had ordered a carriage and after about an hour's drive we stopped in a part of the city that was not altogether familiar to me, though I could see by the street lamps that it

woman that was leading me on. She had thrown aside her opera cloak and reclined on a divan, her golden hair gleaming against the crimson drapery, her dark eyes holding two points of fire in their expanded pupils, like some Eastern enchantress under whose spell I was completely enthralled. I felt my blood course through my veins with a sense of exhilaration I had never before experienced. I could have knelt at her feet. She seemed a creature to be worshipped, who could in turn wield an influence strangely powerful. I thought of the historical women of fascination who have led men to do awful deeds. She seemed to recall the pictures in my mind's eye of such women, as she reclined there her eyes flashing darker under the masses of hair that surrounded her fair face like a crown of gold. I gazed at her in a dazed steadfastness, involuntarily I raised my glass; it was filled. Again: The third time as I would have guided it to my lips it fell from my trembling fingers and shivered at my feet!

I staggered and fell senseless!

When I awoke to consciousness I found myself at my own front door. From the numb conditions of my limbs I knew I had been there at least an hour. I fumbled at the door with my latch key; my fingers were all thumbs. At last, however, it was opened. I thanked my lucky star that my wife was fast asleep; and I succeeded in getting to bed without disturbing her.

Of course I could not go to sleep. The effects of the drugging had passed off—I knew now I had been drugged, for what damnable purpose I could not conjecture, no more than I could account for the other mysterious events of this most remarkable evening I had ever experienced—leaving me in a most nervous state. If it had been a case of robbery the mystery would have been cleared up to my mind immediately; but the fact that a handsome diamond that I wore on my small finger was not missing, and also quite a large amount of money that I happened to have had in my pocket was still there made it more inexplicable. The more I tried to unravel it, the more unfathomable the whole affair became. It was a deeply

laid plot of which I was the victim, though for what purpose I could attribute no the slightest motive.

For days I could think of nothing else. I said nothing to my wife about it. While I could justify my actions in the affair to my own mind, I was not quite sure I could do so to hers. In fact my wife had been in an extremely nervous condition for a long time, and of late I noticed she had become more depressed than ever.

I do not know what raised the suspicion in my mind, but I took a sudden fancy that my wife's late depression was in some way connected with my mysterious adventure. A question she asked me completely confirmed this suspicion and filled me with added alarm.

It was a question relating to an experience of my past life, of which I had never spoken except in the presence of the father and daughter the night of my strange visit and through which source I felt sure she could only gain a possible knowledge of the same. I determined at all hazards to investigate at least what connection my wife could have in the chain of mystery that was surrounding me.

An opportunity offered itself the very next day. I happened to be in Marshall Field's great store doing some purchasing for myself, when I spied my wife coming out of one of the doors leading upon the main street as I was about to pass out of another. I started to attract her attention when I noticed her signal for a cab. This circumstance aroused my suspicion, as it was an unusual thing for my wife to do. I immediately hailed another and followed her. I could not help feeling guilty in this new role of an operative, as spy upon my wife's actions. Not that I suspected her of anything wrong at the time. I was following her more as a protector,

and at the same time determined to investigate the diabolical agencies at work to destroy the happiness of my home and family.

I told the driver to follow my wife's cab, and at the end of its destination to stop about a square behind. He followed these instructions and after a long, noisy ride over the rough cobbles, halted abruptly and opened the cab door for me to alight. I paid him and dismissed the cab, and as I saw my wife's dress disappear in a doorway down about the middle of the next square, made for that direction.

My heart gave a bound as I hurried up the steps to the door I had seen her enter. By some lucky chance it was unlatched, and I walked into the house. Great Heavens! The same rich hangings, the divan with its crimson drapery, the paintings—all revealed themselves in the glare of broad daylight. I heard the murmur of voices somewhere in the house and paused to catch the direction of the sound. I could not seem to make out. Every minute was an hour. I stood in breathless expectation a while longer, then passed noiselessly over the velvet carpet into the adjoining room. A heavy portiere at the rear led into still another, and from thence the voices proceeded. I recognized my wife's in the most excited tone. I glided closer to the curtain and distinctly heard these words:

"What you have already told me I cannot help believe and while I know more, I am afraid—Oh! I can not! not now—"

"Madam—" some one interrupted in the unmistakable voice of my evening's enchantress, "I am simply about to present my impression of your husband as he appears to me in that astral personality which he is most probably unconscious of possessing."

There was a deathlike stillness for a few minutes; suddenly broken by my wife's voice in the most agitated tone accompanied with a low sobbing:

"Oh my God! I cannot look! It is my husband and yet so strangely different!" I could hold back no longer; I drew aside the curtain and through the folding doors which were opened wide enough for the purpose, passed in. I found myself in total darkness. There were a few seconds of suspense and then—at first indistinctly, then clearer and clearer out of the darkness—a face appeared; finally standing in startling bas-relief against a fiery nimbus that surrounded it. In the wide open staring eyes, the compressed lips and sunken cheeks, I recognized my own phylognomy!

"Sylvia!"

It was my wife's name I had uttered before I was conscious what I had done. There was a distinct scream from each woman; one of them fell! I groped my way in the darkness and found it was my wife. I picked her up in my arms and got out of the room and house I know not how. I have a vague memory of hailing a cab and placing my wife in it and then driving home. All that night she was too ill to move; but the next morning she had recovered enough for me to report at police headquarters.

The detective to whom I told my story smiled.

"You have been in the hands of a couple of notorious adventurers," he explained, "for whose arrest the authorities of some large cities in this country and abroad are on the alert. The woman is a clairvoyant, and professes to make a specialty of the science of double personality; practicing this humbuggery by the desperate means you describe by which she has gathered a large clientele in this city. The experiment in your case is one of the most daring. The apparition of your face is a reproduction of a photograph taken in your senseless state that evening in their house, for which purpose you were drugged there and drugged. This by a clever stereopticon effect was used to present the startling revelation of your second personality for your wife's benefit, who happens to be a patron of theirs, and for whom the trick was contrived. They were arrested last night."

FEEDING THE BIRDIES.

Made Friends by Hanging Fat Meat Out for Them in Winter.

Bird Lore, in its notes on winter feeding of wild birds gives a number of methods for such feeding that may be easily employed by any kindly person with the greatest satisfaction. At this time of year birds, like domestic fowls, appreciate fat food. Soup bones, after they have served their purpose in the kettle, may be hung in a tree or elsewhere so that cats may not get at the feathered visitors. Here the birds will pick away every bit of meat and gristle. Suet may be put in the trees this way or the carcass of a fowl, and blue jays, nuthatches, woodpeckers and chickadees, not to mention the English sparrows, will visit this luncheon with delight.

A correspondent writing from Jacksonville, Ill., says: "Ever since I began bird study, six years ago, I have kept a winter bird table; and it has been a never-failing source of pleasure and instruction to me as well as a help to my bird guests during the bad weather. We have an acre of ground around our home, and fine trees, but there are streets on all but the north side, so I chose that side for the bird table, as it is the most sheltered and at the same time affords us the best chance to watch the birds from the house. I began by tying lumps of suet up in small trees near the windows and very soon my guests began to arrive. Later I devised a plan for bringing the suet eaters within closer range. I fastened a rough stick, two or three inches in diameter, to the window shutters, across the window a little below the middle sash and upon this stick I tied my lump of suet."

"From that time we have had the pleasure all winter long of watching our bird neighbors at their luncheon while sitting at our own dining table. I also fastened a wooden tray to the sill into which we put cracked nuts and chopped suet. The most constant visitors were the chickadees and woodpeckers; then bluejays, titmice, snowbirds and nuthatches, with once in a while a cardinal. Of these the chickadees and downy woodpeckers are the tamest. When the spring migrants return we find black-birds and catbirds patronizing the suet. Almost all

the winter birds are fond of both nuts and suet. No one need ever waste old or rancid nuts. The birds will be glad to get them.

Another Illinois correspondent says: "Last fall I hung a birdfood shelf at our south window and early each morning put cracked nuts, suet and birdseed on it. Several tufted titmice visited it the first morning. In a day or two snow-birds and chickadees came in flocks. White-breasted nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, a white-crowned sparrow and a red bellied woodpecker were constant visitors all winter, often coming several times a day. A mockingbird came until the middle of December, making in all nine kinds of birds. These birds all enjoyed the fresh fat pork I nailed to a nearby tree."

Won Royal Red Cross.

The coveted Royal Red Cross of England has been conferred upon Mrs. Violet Clay, as an expression of merit for her services during and after the terrible Indian earthquake which recently occurred at Dharmasala. Mrs. Clay is



MRS. VIOLET CLAY.

the youngest daughter of Sir Henry Nightingale and the wife of Major C. H. Clay of the 7th Gurkha Rifles, who was seriously injured, during the earthquake while saving the life of his little son.

The Adorable Patti.

The famous Adellina Patti, always young, despite her years, first appeared in 1853, at the New York Academy of Music. She was brought forward under the direction of her kinsman and master, Maurice Strakosch, in the title role of "Luci di Lammermoor." She was then only 16 years old, but had already learned to manage her voice, a flute-like flexible soprano, with extraordinary skill and taste, and capable critics at once recognized in the debutante one of those rare singers who appear at long intervals on the musical horizon to revive not only the hopes of managers, but the enthusiasm of the public. This prediction had quick fulfillment. After a short initial engagement in Philadelphia, Miss Patti, plotted by Strakosch, embarked on a concert tour which ended at New Orleans, whence she sailed for London where she may be said to have fairly begun a career, which, like her art, must remain long unique in lyric annals. Thenceforward for upward of 40 years, she held first place, and during the greater part of that time, she was not only a sweeter, but a better singer than any other woman in the world. Her name lends a gold-on ending to any record of the early days of opera in America.

Adulterated Dresses.

Public attention is being directed to the wholesale manner in which the materials that keep us warm during the day, and the blankets which cover us at night, are adulterated.

The silk dress of the lady of a hundred years ago rustled as she moved, on account of the genuineness of the fabric; now it rustles with 36 per cent of salts of tin used to commercialize it. The lady of the period in her silk dress is, indeed, a sort of "woman in armor."

Epsom salts, instead of being used for medicinal purposes, as formerly, are now employed, it would appear, for loading flannels. The so-called table linen of today is not pure linen, such as delighted the hearts of the housewives of olden times but is made largely of cotton, filled with china clay and starch. So, too, collars are often of cotton-reinforced with linen.

In a word, nearly every kind of fabric sold, is adulterated in some form or other, and the public, in blissful ignorance of the truth, finding how poorly the things wear, lays the blame upon the laundryman, the dyer or the cleaner, instead of upon the real culprit, the manufacturer.

It is believed that there is some danger of the skin being attacked by disease as a result of the really poisonous substances which are set free by the action of perspiration upon the metallic compounds contained in apparently innocent wearing apparel.

A Gift With Each Ticket.

George Adams, the manager of the Crystal Theatre of Denver, is operating his play-house upon unique lines. For some time he has given away souvenirs to all his patrons, some of them of considerable value. He has now stocked a large store with about everything that is needed in housekeeping, and is issuing a trading stamp or coupon with every ticket to the theater. The value of each coupon is ten cents and these trading coupons can be exchanged at the store for articles ranging from ten cents to twenty-five dollars.

Mr. Adams has just imported a car load of dishes from Germany, and he states that he has, during the winter, already given away, to Crystal Theater goers, more than three car loads of articles.

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