

THE DIAMOND BUTTON

FROM THE DIARY OF A LAWYER AND THE NOTE BOOK OF A REPORTER.

By BARCLAY NORTE.

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"Fact, a very bad one. I began life that way, but discovered in time that I had not the qualities requisite for success, and so after two seasons of starvation I abandoned the sock and buskin and eventually drifted into journalism. That is my vocation."

He looked at his programme.
"Yes, I thought so," he continued, "you will see on the stage to-night a girl I was once engaged to."

"You cut her when you cut the profession?"

"No, she cut me—for a pair of diamond earrings. I think that fact had quite as much to do with my leaving as the realizing sense of my dramatic deficiencies. Ah, but that was in the long ago."

The first act then demanded their attention, and at its close Tom looked about the house.

He directed the attention of Holbrook to one of the boxes.

"Is that not Flora Ashgrove?"

Holbrook leveled his opera glasses at the box pointed out.

"Yes. No doubt of it, though her back is turned to us. Who are the others in the box?"

"Let me have the glasses," said Tom, "I can not make them out. Three men and another woman. They sit in the shadow. Stop, there is some one coming from the box. Oh, it's Dick Witherpoon, her cousin. That's all right, he'll come back. Is he going out for a clove?"

"Somehow strange to see the handsome Flora at a theatre at this time of the year," commented Holbrook.

"Yes, one would suppose she was at Newport."

"She has been there, and came in on some business with her uncle. The business must have detained her."

"So it seems."

"She must have been in the city at the time of the funeral."

"Whose?"

"Templeton's."

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it? Why, she didn't attend it."

"I shouldn't suppose she would."

"You forget. I told you that she said she was a relative—a remote relative, of Templeton."

"True, so you did. It is strange, isn't it?"

By this time the curtain went up on the second act, and attention was again concentrated on the stage. At its conclusion the lady in the box changed her seat so that she could look over the house. In time, as her eyes roamed over the orchestra circle, they encountered those of Holbrook. She recognized him and bowed—somewhat coldly, Holbrook thought.

"Shall you go and speak to her?"

"No," said Holbrook. "I don't know what people I may meet there. The fact was, while hardly conscious of it, ever since his interview he had regarded her with a sort of repugnance."

"I think you make a mistake."

"Perhaps, but I shan't go, all the same."

"You mustn't drop her acquaintance."

"That may be, but I don't think her recognition was particularly encouraging. Have you noticed that she has not looked our way once since?"

Tom was not satisfied. Just what Holbrook was to do when he did see her, he could not have suggested. When Holbrook added that in a small box, with several about in close proximity, she was not likely to engage in a confidential conversation, he was compelled to acquiesce. Still he thought Holbrook should call on her.

Finally he said:

"See here, Holbrook. You've seen this opera before, and only care for the music. Well, let us go upstairs. Undoubtedly that party will go on the roof after the performance. We can go up there and hear the music as well as here. I would like to get a nearer view of the people with her."

"To what purpose?"

"Oh, who can tell? I haven't any reason or purpose. Instinct tells me to do something."

"Very well; we'll go."

They left their seats, and Holbrook was conscious that Flora watched them steadily as they went up the aisle. He made sure of it at the door, when he could do so without being observed.

Once upstairs they seated themselves so that they could watch the elevator without being seen.

"I do not know what you are up to," complained Holbrook.

"Neither do I," replied Tom with a laugh. "But the story of your interview with the handsome Flora has made a deep impression. I want to become familiar with those about her. That's all."

They lit cigars, smoked and listened to the music until the curtain finally fell.

"Now, then," said Tom, "in a few minutes we'll know whether we have deprived ourselves of comfortable seats during the third act for nothing."

Holbrook, who was in a bad humor, replied:

"I'm sure we did. She won't go up there; she would think it bad form."

"Bah! It's bad form, so her set would say, to be seen at a theatre at this time of year, especially in the city."

"Hush," he continued, "there she goes now, as the brightly lighted elevator glided up. Come, let us go up. No wait until they have had time to be seated."

They waited a moment or two, and then ascended the stairs to the roof. At first they did not see the party, but carefully proceeding they came upon them partially hid behind a large fir tree planted in a tub. They came upon them

Saluting them, he addressed himself to Flora.

"I am surprised to find you in the city, Miss Ashgrove."

"You find me disgusted," she replied. "Unhappily a tyrant about this business has returned to-morrow."

Her manner was cold, even repellent and did not offer encouragement. He was somewhat embarrassed, and would have felt awkward if Mr. Witherpoon had not asked him to join them in their refreshments.

In declining on the score of having a friend from whom he had parted only to pay his respects to them, he was enabled not only to regain self-possession, but to recognize in the gentleman Tom had described as "an old file," one of New York's first lawyers.

By no means pleased with Flora's reception of him, he determined to give her a rap before parting from her.

Lowering his tone he said:

"I did not see you at the funeral of your relative."

"Who?" she said, with lazy surprise.

"Templeton—your remote relative."

"Oh, did I say he was a remote relative?" This was said with a haughtiness not unminged with contempt, as she languidly fanned herself. She did not deign to explain why she was absent.

Holbrook found himself growing red and angry, when to his surprise he saw Flora straighten up quickly, while an anxious, even frightened, expression swept over her face. She looked intently behind him.

He turned and saw a gentleman fashionably clad. He did not know him.

He turned to Flora. She was gazing at him (Holbrook) fixedly; there was a worried, inquiring expression in her eyes; her color was coming and going and her chest heaving, her mouth slightly open.

Apparently she paid little or no attention to the new comer, who was greeting the others of the group.

Holbrook noticed the change in her demeanor and was surprised; so much so that he said bluntly and awkwardly: "I did you good night, Miss Ashgrove," and bowing to the others returned to Tom.

"What passed between you?" asked Tom.

"Nothing of any moment. She treated me outrageously."

He then gave Tom a literal statement of what had passed, save her curious manner toward him at the end.

He was abstracted, and did not hear what Tom was saying, but stealthily watched the group. He could not fail to notice the extreme nervousness in Flora's manner, and that she was urging their departure. It was quite evident the rest were comfortably enjoying themselves and not disposed to leave.

Finally Flora said something to the newcomer and he arose, stepped to her side and offered her arm. She took it, and they walked toward the front on the Broadway side and sat down out of view.

Holbrook followed them with his eyes. Suddenly he slapped his hand on his knee.

"By Jove, Tom, I've an idea."

"Jot it down, my boy," said the imperturbable Tom; "sometimes they are valuable."

"It's a suspicion."

"Ah, that is valuable, especially in the enterprise we have entered upon."

"Yes, by Jove—tall—slim—dark hair—complexion—handsome profile—straight nose. By Jove!"

"What the deuce are you muttering about?"

"Did you see that man who joined the Witherpoon group while I was talking with Flora?"

"Yes, handsome fellow. Who is he?"

"I have a suspicion he is the murderer."

"The devil!"

"No, the murderer."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't think I suspect."

"Ah, a nice distinction. What makes you suspect?"

"You recollect that in my interview with Flora she inquired particularly about the man I saw running away, asking me whether he was tall, slim and dark complexioned."

"Very well."

"Well, this fellow answers to the description."

"So he does. How did they address him when he came up?"

"I only heard them call him 'Harry.'"

"On intimate terms with the family, then."

"That accounts for her curious manner when he joined them," said Holbrook musingly.

"What is that?"

Holbrook described how Flora conducted herself.

"Thunder, the suspicion takes form. It is something to work upon."

"We must wait for him to be seen."

"That is easy; wait for me a minute."

Tom hastily disappeared in the direction of the elevator. Holbrook leaned back, smoked his cigar, and pondered on the situation. Tom joined him in a short time, and said: "Come with me to the elevator."

They went off together, and then a man stepped up to them.

He was a medium sized, thin man, cheaply clad, with sharp features and small eyes.

"This is my friend Mr. Holbrook. He will point out to you a man to whom you know who he is, his name, residence, habits, business—all that you can find out."

"Very well," said the man.

"Follow Holbrook."

The two entered and seated themselves at a point where they could observe the Witherpoon group without being seen.

They had hardly seated themselves when Flora and the man in whom they were so much interested joined her friends again.

"That is the man," said Holbrook.

"The one who has that handsome lady on his arm."

"Miss Ashgrove," said the man.

"Yes, you know her, I see."

"Yes, and the man too."

"Oh, let us go to Mr. Bryan, then."

They went out without being observed. Flora's back was turned to them. They found Tom at the elevator and went down stairs.

"He knows him," said Holbrook to Tom when they were on the pavement.

"Who is he?" asked Tom.

"Mr. Fountain—Harry Fountain."

"What is he?"

"Fashionable young man—member of Union club."

"Where does he live?"

"That I don't know. I've told you all I do know."

"Then find out everything you can about him. I shan't want to see you until you bring me the information."

"It will be a short job."

"So much the better," said Tom.

"Good-night."

"Come, Holbrook, let's go," said Tom.

"Who is that man?" asked Holbrook.

"My shadow."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I say. I employ him as a shadow. To find out things—to follow men—a spy, if you will."

"What do you do that for?"

"You are not up to the new dodges of modern journalism. He is always in my employ."

"The deuce! that's pleasant to hear. How did you happen to find him so quickly when you wanted him?"

"I whistled for him."

"Pshaw!"

"That's what I did. When we dined at Del's he was somewhere outside; when we were in the theatre he was somewhere outside, and had I not sent him off now he would have been somewhere outside wherever I was until I went to bed. At any time I had only to give the whistle—understood between us, and he would have appeared."

"So that's modern journalism, is it?"

"Oh, no, only one of the recent up-growths. I invented it."

"Well, come down to the hotel and take a nightcap."

"No, I'm for bed, and my room is not far from here. I've a big day before me to-morrow. I may call on you in the morning. Good-night."

"Do: good-night."

CHAPTER XI.

A NIGHT EXPERIENCE ON BROADWAY.

HOLBROOK walked down Broadway to wear of the excitement under which he felt he was laboring.

"Man-huntin is as fascinating a sport as tiger hunting," he said to himself. "No that I know any thing of tiger hunting, but I suppose it is a wonder if we have struck the right track. All events it is a beginning and something definite to work upon. How grateful Annie Templeton would be if we were to be successful! What a pretty sight her face would present—an incentive for any man to work."

Thus musing he strode along at a rapid gait, feeling positive pleasure in the exercise. By and by he became conscious that some one was following him. He crossed the street to determine this. The person he suspected crossed also. He slackened his pace, a tall, slim figure passed him, and he thought he was mistaken as he saw it disappear in the darkness.

So he forged ahead. Shortly he found the person was behind him again.

He was now approaching a fashionable drinking saloon, and he determined to stop there and see what his follower would do.

He did so, and met an acquaintance with whom he went to the bar.

Immediately the door opened and a tall, slim man entered. It was the person who had followed him.

Holbrook observed him closely through the glass behind the bar, while chatting with his acquaintance.

The tall, slim man was of no mean young—evidently 60 or 65 years of age; his hair was white, his face well seamed with wrinkles. He was clad in respectable black, and was upright in carriage.

Holbrook thought he might have been the man Fountain described to follow him, and then dismissed the idea as an absurdity and attributed it to his heated imagination.

A glance at the hand the person laid on the bar, which Holbrook could regard at short range without turning, such was his position, confirmed his idea of its absurdity. It was unmistakably the hand of an aged person; there could be no "make up" in that.

Presently the old man dropped a piece of money on the floor. As he stooped to pick it up he struck Holbrook in the back.

Convinced as he was that he had been touched purposely, from an impulse he could not restrain he turned.

The old man apologized in most courteous terms. His voice was pleasant, but Holbrook felt that the dark eyes of the old man most keenly and rapidly scrutinized his features.

However, he courteously responded to his apologies and the old man passed on into the street.

"That was done on purpose," said the acquaintance.

"I thought so too," replied Holbrook. The jarkeeper, who had overheard this exchange, said:

"He asked me who you were, sir."

"What did you tell him?"

"That I didn't know which was the truth."

Holbrook went out. The old man stood in the shadow of an adjoining door. Holbrook leaped into a cab and told the man to drive to the Hoffman house and then watched from the window to see if he was followed.

The old man remained where Holbrook had seen him.

"I've spent a dollar and a half for nothing," he said. "The probability is that he mistook me for some one else and discovered his error in the drinking place, so he went on to his own hotel."

When he arrived there he went to his desk for letters and cards that might have been left him, he was told by a clerk that a gentleman had called upon him during the evening, but had refused either his name or leave a card.

Saying that he was unknown to Mr. Holbrook, and would visit him at his office some time during the following day.

Inquiring what the man looked like he was given a description which tallied with that of the old man whom he had encountered on Broadway, but he soon previously.

To say he was alarmed would be to say what was not true, but there is no question but that it made him uneasy.

He began to doubt the advisability of the campaign upon which he had entered, and into which he had been irresistibly drawn.

LOSS AND GAIN.

I sorrowed that the golden day was dead.

Its light no more the country side adorning.

But whilst I grieved, behold! like east wind red With morning.

I sighed that merry youth was forced to go.

And doff the wreath that did so well become her.

But whilst I mourned at her absence, he! True summer.

I mourned because the daffodils were killed.

By burning sites that scorched my early peddling.

But whilst for those I pined my hands were filled With roses.

Half broken hearted I bewailed the end Of friendship that which none had once seemed sacred.

But whilst I wept I found a never friend And dancer.

And thus I learned old pleasures are exchanged For that same pleasure better and given!

Until at last we find this earth exchanged For heaven.

—Eileen Thorneycroft Fowler in Good Words.

THE LOVE OF A DAY.

"Well, Jack," observed Mr. Mortimore

Weldon, as he found himself on the

steps of his charming country residence

upon the Hudson, "where are you going to-day, my dear boy? Europe, I guess?"

"Not a bit of it, father. I want to do my own dear land first. Just think of all there is to see here."

"We ain't fashionable, Jack."

"If you go that, sir, all the English swells consider it correct form, as they call it, to run over here. I tell you I was heartily ashamed of myself when that nice young fellow, Sir Henry Hardon, asked my opinion about the distances in the Yellowstone Park. I was nearly snook enough to pretend to know, although I was never within 2,000 miles of the place. No, father, America first, say I."

"Spoken like a young American eagle,"

laughed the older man, with a sparkle in his eye that indicated the truth that every true son of the Stars and Stripes fondles in his heart's core.

Mr. Mortimore Weldon is a banker, and a very wealthy one. His wife is his bond, and his debts among moneyed men are regarded as law. His wife is one of those beautiful women who "do" and "spin, and scold the maids," as did her grandmother, a Randolph of Virginia, a hundred years ago.

There are two children, a daughter, Mildred, aged 17, who is to come out at the first Patriarch's ball of next season, and Jack, a partner in the bank, aged 23 years.

Jack graduated at Harvard, and was struck in the University race. He is a trifle over six feet, built in proportion, and the owner of a pair of laughing blue eyes, and thirty-two magnificent teeth that flash beneath his tawny mustache.

Instead of dressing the "dreary drab" of fashionable society, Jack plunged into banking with the ardor with which he took to boating, and is now not only his father's secretary and partner, but his counselor as well.

Jack has never cared for female society. He of course attended balls and receptions, and every species of entertainment that fashionable society resorts to, but he prefers his book and his pipe, his dog and his gun, and his sport sister to all the giddy dissipations of the "madding crowd."

It was a brilliant July day of last year that this conversation between father and son took place, and two weeks later found Jack Weldon at the Profile house in the White mountains, on a tramp after the most approved fashion. He wore a dust colored check knickerbocker suit, with big gutters and a deerstalker's cap. His impedimenta, or baggage, consisted of a knapsack and alpenstock and a field glass of great power. He was alone, and least lonely, his most alone.

Jack was clad in conventional garments awaited him at such hotels along his route as pleased his imperial majesty to regard in the light of temporary headquarters, for his mother on kissing him as he reëntered these solemn words:

"Jack, never, never be without your evening dress."

Jack had made the Profile house his headquarters for a week, debouching from it to various romantic passes and notches only accessible to those lithe of limb and brawny of muscle. Instead of joining in the lawn tennis or the hops he used to sit for hours on the piazza, his pipe in his mouth, watching the comers and goers, and indulging in all sorts and conditions that passed merrily on their way.

It must be told, but in the strictest confidence, that Jack meditated a book, and he had even chuckled over the title, "Jack Minus Jill," but fate willed that the book should remain unwritten.

Jack Weldon was no mere tyro as a walker. A member of the Athletic club of New York, he was a fancy man in the gymnasium and in the Wrenthamster Presbyterian club second to none. For a wagger he walked from Highbridge to Yonkers and back within a given time and what seemed an impossible time, yet he scored a victory with several minutes to spare.

Mountain climbing was his delight, and to be out in the early dawn, up in the silver mist, and in the winter months in accessible crags, to the youthful banker was nearer heaven than anything that earth could give him.

The notches around the Profile mountain are as numerous as they are inaccessible. No more two weeks' holiday young man need tempt them; they mean collar work from the crown to the summit of a man than an ascent of the Paterfamilias or Mont Blanc. Jack found the hotel crowded from cellar to garret, but, having had his baggage sent on in advance, the clerk, on account of the expensive appearance of the solid leather, nickel plated valise, discovered that one room still remained open to the owner, and young Weldon was comfortably stowed away.

His appearance in the dining room created a tremor in the heart of one young lady's mamma, a certain Mrs. Pomroy De Smythe, hailing from the classic regions of Bay Bostons.

"Addie," she whispered to her daughter, "sit up straight, love, bite your lips a little, put on an English stare, for I see young Weldon, the banker, has arrived, and he's eligible, you know."

Miss De Smythe most willingly executed the commands of the general, her mother, and as Jack was passing the old lady threw out her grappling iron.

"Mr. Weldon, who would have imagined that you would be found in this out of the way place? Addie, darling, don't you see Mr. Weldon? That dear child is such a dreamer."

Jack bowed to Addie, and after a commonplace remark was for passing down to an unoccupied table in a remote corner of the room, but Mrs. Pomroy De Smythe insisted upon his taking a seat at the table facing Addie, and as a consequence a pair of very dramatic eyes and a general undisciplined expression of love and undisciplined laughter. Wishing both ladies in Jericho, the unwilling Weldon submitted to his fate.

"It will be only for a couple of days," he said to himself; "and I need not be at all pleased."

Mrs. Pomroy De Smythe was acquainted with Jack's mother, Mrs. De Smythe, and gave no quarter to plebeian blood.

"There is an awful mixture of people here," Mr. Weldon, he said. "Your dear mother couldn't, wouldn't stand it. There are one or two parties we can know, one of them only in a hotel way. How are all the rosebuds of New York? I presume you have committed and have this

"Not I," said Jack, honestly. "I am too in that line at all."

"Did you not admire some one of the debutantes? Come now, Addie, why don't you cross-examine Mr. Weldon?"

Addie gazed into his eyes, and poor Jack, who was not accustomed to such maneuvering, blushed up to and inside the roots of his hair.

"I assure you," he stammered, "I really do go to the ladies' society, and," he gallantly added, "I admire them all so much that I could not possibly make a selection."

"I like that," laughed Addie, her eyes plunged into his. "He should see Miss Winthrop, mamma, should he not?"

"Well, I don't know that and is so very much," responded Mrs. De Smythe.

"She is immensely admired