

## AN ENGAGEMENT RING.

BY FREDERICK PALMER.

From New York Weekly.

### CHAPTER I.

For many months Arthur Dunstan had been paying attentions to two amiable and companionable girls—Eugenia Marlowe and Clara Santley—and for a long time he knew not which he preferred. He was the son of a millionaire banker in Broad street, New York, and was likely to soon become a partner in the house.

Late one afternoon, while Arthur was sitting at his desk, dreamily listening to the click, click of the type writer, as quickly, as deftly as an inspiration comes to a poet, the realization came to him that it was Miss Santley whom he loved. Yes, he loved her madly, and life would be unbearable to him until he knew that she returned his affection. Within three minutes he was roundly rating himself for not having known from the first that Clara was in every way the more lovable lady of the puzzling pair.

When that same evening this beautiful young lady said "Yes," and he held her close to his heart, he realized what a blessed thing it is to own completely the affection of a woman you love—and to know that she is the right one.

"Are you very sure, Arthur, that you do not care more for Miss Marlowe?" she asked, and then added, before he had time to answer: "She is a very pretty girl you know."

"Yes. Very sure. This is the happiest moment in all my life. I wish I had something here as a token of remembrance."

He looked down at his boots as if in search of something, but nothing offered itself.

"Here, take this!" She drew from her finger a ring and held it out before him. It was a sapphire of old-fashioned design. "It's an heir-loom of the family. You may keep it until you bring me another."

She seized his hand and tried nervously to put it on his little finger. It was too small, however, and would barely pass the first joint.

She stepped back a little distance and surveyed him with admiration. "My! what a big fellow you are! You shall not spoil my plan, though."

After fingering in his vest pocket an unreasonably long time, she succeeded in bringing out his watch, and, after she had unhooked the chain, she slipped the ring upon it. "There! now, I hope I shall always have you so secure."

"You shall," he answered, chivalrously, happily.

"Don't forget that affair at Morton's is tomorrow night. Come early," she said, as they parted at the door.

As she hurried up to her room with light step, she was so happy that she wished she might herald the fact of her engagement to all of the gay people who would assemble at Mrs. Morton's the next evening.

Mr. Dunstan was sitting in his office the next day at precisely the same hour that he had discovered the identity of his sweetheart on the afternoon previous, when he unconsciously ran his finger along his watch-chain and discovered that something which ought to be

there was missing. He looked—the ring was gone! He suddenly became greatly excited. He fumbled among his papers with nervous fingers, and pulled out and examined every drawer in his desk.

"Beggs, have you seen a ring—a sapphire ring of old-fashioned design—about here?"

Beggs said he had not, and he was very sorry. Then every clerk in the office was questioned until his father came very near precipitating a fatal attack of heart disease, because the business of the office was interrupted by what he considered a very trivial occurrence.

"I must have left it in my room," Dunstan thought. "Probably I took it off when I changed from one vest to another."

He hurried home at once, in a fever of alarm. Great drops of perspiration stood on Arthur's forehead as he sat down for a moment's rest, puffing madly at a cigar. Collars, cuffs, and articles of men's wearing apparel were in a little while distributed over the floor. The ring! Where was it? He looked at the broken bric-a-brac and puffed harder at his cigar. One servant had been insulted with accusations and another compelled to three times sift over all the refuse in the ash can without avail.

Dunstan knew how highly Miss Santley valued the ring. It was a relic of the Santley family's history, a history of which she was very proud. A family history was something that Miss Marlowe did not possess, although her father had spent much of the money he had made in mining to cover up the absence of a family record. Naturally Miss Marlowe was envious of her rival's heir-loom, an equal of which she did not possess.

"Lost or stolen," Dunstan concluded, was the last resort. He drove to the nearest police station at once and left a complete description of the ring. Then he wrote an advertisement for the morning papers which read after this fashion:

"Lost.—A gold ring, sapphire setting, antique design. Finder will be rewarded with \$100 and no questions asked."

This notice he placed in all the prominent papers, save one, which he knew that her father read every morning as regularly as he ate his breakfast. His sweetheart probably did not read the morning papers, but if she should happen to see his little advertisement he felt that she could not fail to recognize the property in question, and then he would be irretrievably lost. What would she or any other girl think of a lover who was so careless as to lose a token of her love and confidence within twenty-four hours after they had become engaged?

About the same time in the afternoon that Mr. Arthur Dunstan was passing in his notice at one of the little offices on upper Broadway which receives "ads" for all the papers Mr. Walter Gibson, a young theatrical manager, was sauntering along Sixth avenue. The important business of selecting an engagement ring had been occupying his attention since luncheon. He was returning to his apartments without one, simply because in all the costly array of rings in the store windows he had been unable to find one which he thought would

suit the taste and fancy of his fiancée. He and Dunstan were acquaintances and had sometimes been called rivals.

The sparkle of a diamond in the rays of the sunlight, displayed in a window, attracted his attention just because he happened to be thinking of diamonds. He instinctively turned aside to look at it. Next to the diamond, which was not at all remarkable, was a sapphire ring of antique design attached to a card bearing the explanation:

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