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## REMARKABLE CASE OF MONOMANIA.

I was alone in the shop one day when a beautiful female dressed in the richest manner, came in, accompanied by a couple of small boys, her sons, for each of whom she wanted a suit of clothes. I was now old enough to take charge of the shop, and sell in Mr. Williams' absence, and therefore threw down several pieces of fine cloth for her to examine, naming to her enquiries, the price of suits for her sons from either. With her white, taper fingers, sparkling with jewels, she tried the texture of various pieces of goods, finding in each some objection, until I threw down for her examination a roll of fine, blue cloth, of light body, and remarkably soft and glossy surface. It was a new style of cloth then, and was finished in the richest manner.

'Beautiful!—beautiful!' said she, as I displayed it, in the soft light that came through a shaded window, 'what will each suit cost of this?'

'We could not make suits from this cloth for less than \$25 apiece.'

'That seems high,'—she remarked, musingly. 'Twenty-five dollars apiece?'

'It may seem high, madam—but that cloth is worth twelve dollars a yard, and we should lose on the clothes if we made them for less.'

'Wont you make the suits for \$45?' she said, after a moment's thought, turning upon me a pair of the brightest eyes I ever saw in woman's head, a sweet smile playing about her lips and just disclosing glimpses of a set of teeth white as the mountain's snows.

'Indeed, madam,' said I, half subdued, 'I cannot possibly say less than fifty dollars. It is a beautiful piece of cloth, and very costly.'

'Oh, I am sure you can say forty-five—come, now just say forty-five, and as soon as they are done, send your bill down to Mr. —, and you will have the money in hand.' And she looked at me with such a coaxing and winning smile, that to resist was next to impossible, even though my master should cut his cloth without profit.

'Well, madam,' said I, 'as long as the terms are to be cash, and Mr. — is to pay the bill (He was one of the wealthiest and most punctual men in the city) I will say forty-five dollars, but we shall make nothing on the clothes.'

She now wanted a choice of buttons, and I placed a box before her containing a great variety. She looked them over and over again, and after choosing and refusing half a dozen patterns, seemed as far from meeting with any thing to suit her taste as at first. Meanwhile a customer came in, whom she requested that I should wait upon while she made her selection. I did so, and was occupied some ten minutes, during which time she was looking over the buttons—amusing herself with examining the many beautiful patterns. As soon as the last customer went out, she made the choice, and also left the shop.

When Mr. Williams came in I told him of the sale which I had had made, and the reasons, which were odd enough, for my selling the suits at such a reduction. He laughed at my susceptibility to beauty and winning grace, and said that the clothes could be barely afforded at forty-five dollars, but as the terms were cash, and he wanted money the next week, badly, he should have consented to make them at that price himself.

The clothes were cut out and made,—sent home and the cash paid on the presentation of the bill to Mr. —.

We had a boy, whose great propensity to steal every thing he could lay his hands on, was a source of much vexation to Mr. Williams. Several times he had been detected in carrying off and selling trinkets from the shop, and had as frequently been severely punished. A few days after Mrs. — had been at the shop, a package of buttons of a peculiar and choice pattern were missed, and search made for them in every box and drawer. Tom, the boy alluded to, was finally called up and charged with having taken them. He looked much confused on the accusation, but stoutly denied the charge. But as the buttons were certainly gone, and as they could not go, as Mr. Williams alleged, without hands, and as Tom was the only one about the place who had ever been known to take what was not his own, he must produce the buttons or be flogged. Poor Tom cried bitterly, protesting his innocence, but Mr. Williams had suffered himself to get into a passion, and would listen to none of his earnest denials. He was hurried off into the garret, and cowed severely. The poor fellow's cries were heard down in the shop, and for once we

could not help thinking him punished unjustly. He continued, after his punishment to deny having had any thing to do with the buttons, and even Mr. Williams began to regret that he had whipped him so severely.

Nothing was heard of the buttons, until about four months after, when the two little suits of clothes we had made for Mrs. — were sent back for repair, with sets of beautiful buttons to replace the old ones, which Mr. Williams at once recognized as precisely similar to those lost. I mentioned to him the fact of Mrs. — having handled our buttons, but he repudiated the inference my allusion drew, and said that others had buttons of the same pattern as well as he. The confidence seemed to me a little strange, and considering her peculiar manner, I could not divert my mind of the idea that Mrs. — had carried off the package of buttons. In a few minutes after the servant had left the clothes, Mrs. — herself came in to give some directions about them. Her sweet face, winning and amiable manners, and perfect self-possession, at once dispelled the foul suspicion I had entertained almost involuntarily, and I censured myself for the singular hallucination that a moment before possessed me.

'These are the most beautiful buttons, Mr. Williams, I have ever seen,' said she picking up one from the counter, where they lay in the open paper. 'Wont they look charming on the children's clothes. They are far prettier than the old ones. Really, Mr. Williams I don't think you displayed much taste in your selection.'

'Why madam, I put on the ones you chose.'

'Did you, indeed, then I must have been in one of my absent moods, for surely if I had been in my right senses I never would have chosen these ugly things. Let me look at some of your's, and see if you have any that I may be tempted to buy, for I have a singular passion for beautiful buttons.'

The box of choice buttons was instantly thrown open for her inspection, and after admiring some of the neatest patterns, she concluded that none were so pretty as the ones she had, and went out.

In a day or two after in looking for a peculiar pattern of buttons for a gentleman's coat, they were missed from the box. 'This is strange,' muttered my master to himself. 'Can it be possible that Mrs. — took them? Certainly not! What on earth could she want with them. She is under no necessity to steal.'

The mere entertainment of suspicion gives it strength, and soon the question of Mrs. —'s honesty began to be troublesome to the mind of Mr. Williams. He could not dismiss the subject much as he felt inclined so to do. One day a neighbour happened to call in the shop, and Mr. Williams from some cause alluded to the subject of the lost buttons, and mentioned the singular coincidence in relation to them and the visits of Mrs. —.

'I suppose then,' was his reply, 'that the madam has got at some of her slippery tricks again.'

'What do you mean?' said Mr. Williams.

'Mean? why have you not heard that Mrs. — is naturally light-fingered?'

'No, indeed, I never heard of any such thing.'

'Then you have never heard half of the strange things which happen in this world. Why there are more than twenty dry good store keepers on Market street, who have their instructions from her husband to say nothing about any goods she may be seen carrying off from their stores, but to send in their bills to him and get their money. He has tried almost every means to break her of her strange propensity to steal, but all to no purpose. He is said to have kept her on bread and water for weeks and weeks at a time. To have confined her to the house for months together, but all to no purpose. The very first time she could get out, she would pick up cheap or costly things, as they came in her way—as it seemed merely for the excitement of stealing. She once stole a diamond breast pin worth a hundred dollars from a jeweller's store on Market street, when no one was in attendance but a clerk, who did not detect her, and was not aware of her propensity. The pin was missed by the owner very shortly after, and learning who had been in the store, immediately suspected the truth. He went forthwith to her husband, and apologising for the nature of his visit, told him his loss and his suspicions. Mr. — leaned his head upon his hands at the desk where he sat for some moments, and then heaving a long sigh, mildly requested the jeweller to take a seat and wait a few moments. He left his counting room, and was gone nearly half an hour. When he returned he made no remark, but drew a check for a hundred

dollars, and handing it to the jeweller, politely bowed him out.

'Can this be possible?'

'Indeed it is true every word. And Mrs. — is not the only person in high life in Baltimore who is addicted to such things. It is a strange kind of monomania, so it is called when the wealthy indulge in it; but a poor woman caught in such acts would be sent to the Penitentiary. In the case of the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. — I am at loss to understand its nature. She has as much money as she wants for every thing, and yet she is said to set no value upon any thing that she does not steal. At fashionable parties, she will steal dessert spoons, and silver knives, and from her friends' dressing rooms carry off fine laces, or collars, or any little trifle that comes in her way.

I certainly was never more astonished in my life than I was at this relation of the moral obliquity of this lady. I had never heard of any instances of the kind then, though many have come to my knowledge since. It was melancholy indeed to think that one so beautiful, so amiable in all her social relations, so intelligent and accomplished, should by some perversion of the moral powers of her mind, be utterly incapable of appreciating the spirit of that commandment, which says, 'Thou shalt not steal.'

I have thus introduced this lady to the reader for the purpose of relating a circumstance which may still be remembered by some of the older inhabitants of our city—a circumstance which thrilled with astonishment all classes of society, and awoke an interest and an excitement which was not allayed for years.

Unfortunately for Mrs. — she attempted to practice these unlawful acts on a low-bred, vindictive fellow, who kept a dry goods store in Ward street. He saw the theft and pointed it out to his clerk, that he might be a witness against her. The article stolen was a small piece of fine thread lace, worth, probably ten dollars.

The moment Mrs. — left the store he went to a magistrate's and made oath of the theft. An officer was immediately despatched with a warrant, and the distressed lady torn by force from her family and confronted with her accuser at the Police Office. Unable to deny the charge, for the officer had found the piece of lace on her table and brought it with him, she begged, with tears, the merchant to pass by the offence. But hard of heart, he would listen to no palliation and requested the magistrate to make out a commitment, unless bail were obtained, as he was determined that the whole affair should be made the subject of legal action.

An officer was despatched to the counting room of Mr. —, who appeared at the Magistrate's office greatly agitated. The meeting between himself and his guilty wife was affecting in the extreme. She flung herself, trembling and weeping in his arms, and hiding her head in his bosom, begged him to save her from persecutors. With all the tenderness of a parent for his child, he soothed and comforted her, assuring her that he would satisfy all demands against her and save her from the consequences of her indiscretion. The security offered was of course accepted. He entered into recognizance in the sum of one thousand dollars, for her appearance at the June term of the criminal court, which would set in about six weeks. A carriage was then called, and the beautiful, and intelligent, but unhappy lady, was driven off to the house whence but a short time before she had been torn from amid her children, and brought to the bar of justice as a felon.

Supposing that all proceedings could easily be stayed, Mr. — waited immediately upon the store keeper who had caused her to be arrested, but he positively refused to stop the course of justice.

'But my dear Sir,' urged the heart-stricken man—'no possible good can grow out of this prosecution. I will willingly make you restitution ten, twenty, an hundred fold. Mrs. — labors under a strange and painful monomania. She has money for whatever she desires, and yet she sets no value upon any thing that she does not take secretly. At all times I am willing, and hold myself in readiness to pay for whatever she may take. Name the amount that will satisfy you.'

'There is no use in your talking to me any farther on the subject,' said the unfeeling and evil minded dealer, 'You rich people call stealing 'monomania' when the thief is among yourselves. But I know no distinctions, and will make none. Mrs. — must stand her trial, and take the penitentiary for her abiding place if there is any justice to be had in this city. I have heard of her tricks before, and in charity will put a stop to her light fingered pleasantries.'

'But, my dear sir—'

'But me no buts,' said the wretch, and turned abruptly from the pleading husband.