

THE LOST EARRING.

BY HUKKARU.

CHAPTER II.

Returning from his office that day of Elsie's loss, Algernon Smith had met De Tomkques, to whom he was not particularly partial, as he believed him to have once been his rival for the hand of Miss Jefferson. But having won the prize Algernon could afford to be magnanimous and therefore made no objection to De Tomkques' turning, and joining him in a stroll up town.

After a few commonplace remarks, De Tomkques, who was very vain of his small hands, held up one of them, on which a diamond ring sparkled, and asked Algernon what he thought of it.

Algernon did not consider that diamonds became a man, but being perfectly indifferent as to whether De Tomkques wore those jewels or not, he replied "it was very pretty and a present I suppose."

"Ah, that's telling my boy," said De Tomkques with a knowing look, "it came out of an earring, but mums the word."

"All right," answered Algernon laughing, "we part here; good evening."

I will here explain that what De Tomkques said about his jewel was quite correct, but as I thoroughly despise the ordinary and stale mysteries, by which novel writers always endeavor to hide their plots—and never succeed—I will at once state, that he had bought his ring two days before at Benedicts, and though the diamond had certainly been once in an earring, it had no more to do with Elsie's loss than you or I had.

When Algernon arrived at the Jeffersons' apartments, he found Elsie alone,—her father having, as we are aware, gone to Richardson's on Seventh Avenue—but Algernon did not come to see Franklin Jefferson, and I blush to say, did not even enquire after him, for men in a certain condition, are all utterly wrapped up in "one" being, angel, darling, call her what you will, and so he was entirely happy, and content to be greeted by Elsie alone.

"But what is this my dearest? You seem out of spirits," he observed when they had seated themselves on the sofa.

"Oh Algernon! I have had such a loss; I secretly know how to tell you," replied Elsie.

"Great heavens! What is the matter? Your father?"

"Papa is quite well; but I have lost—one of those beautiful earrings you gave me."

"Lost one of your earrings!" cried Algernon, staggering to his feet, with De Tomkques' confounded ring forcing itself into his mind, like Othello's first misgiving.—"Has anyone been here to-day?"

"No; yes, Mr. De Tomkques called. Oh Algernon, what is it, are you ill?"



It is rumored in sporting circles that the well known handsome filly, "American Belle," is about to become the property of Lord Cadinaugh.

"Ill Elsie! No I am not ill. Ha! Ha! De Tomkques called you say, I understand Miss Jefferson—all is over."

By the last three words he intended to imply, of course, that from thenceforth, and for ever and ever, his life was to be a blank, a dreary waste, and so forth. Elsie hardly grasped his meaning, but a very dramatic scene would doubtless have followed, had not her father at that minute hurried into the room.

"Look here Elsie" said Mr. Jefferson, never noticing the glum glances of his future son-in-law, or the angry flush upon his daughter's face, "Richardson tells me there is another trap in the basement,

before the pipe from your basin joins the main one of the house, and perhaps the earring may be there."

"I do not give you any hopes, but there is just a chance," added Richardson himself from the doorway.

"Then let us try at once" cried Elsie eagerly.

"You will never find it," remarked Algernon gloomily, but no one paid him any attention.

Proceeding down stairs, they all arrived at where the lower trap was, and Richardson after much difficulty forced it open. He emptied out all the rubbish, in which were several pieces of soap, a solid silver teaspoon, but alas no earring.

"I thought not" said the plumber, closing up the trap, and gathering up his tools he took his departure, with the air of a man who had proved his case.

Sadly and slowly did Jefferson, Algernon, and Elsie turn to ascend the stairs, when the latter called to Sam and bade him gather up the rubbish carefully, put it in a bowl, and bring it to her room.

On reaching their apartment, Elsie took no notice of Algernon, but leaving him with her father straightway retired and summoned Jemima. After washing and sifting the refuse, brought from below, very carefully, Elsie with a cry of blight pounced upon the lost jewel!

Had the fear of detection caused Jemima to thrust the earring among the rubbish, or had the better feelings of her nature prevailed? I cannot say, for after the discovery that virtuous female announced her intention of leaving Miss Jefferson's service, which she accordingly did.

On regaining her treasure, Elsie put her earrings into her pretty ears, and marched gravely into the drawing-room, where her father and lover were seated, as silent as a pair of mutes at a funeral.

"See Papa!" she said, pointing to her ears.

"Eureka!" exclaimed Mr. Jefferson. "the lost is found, and we will have roast veal for dinner to-morrow."

Algernon looked and felt excessively foolish. He said he deserved to be horse-whipped, which did not appear to move Elsie in the least, but when he went up to her, and taking both her hands in his, whispered in a transport, that bright and sparkling as the diamonds where, they could not nearly equal her eyes, she smiled and forgave him, for what woman can withstand such a compliment? They are young now, but when they grow old and their eyes are dim to others, I trust my friend will still feel he can pay them the same tribute.

Thus endeth this most veracious history of The Lost Earring.