

The Romance of Two Cameras.



IT was in the old Spanish town of Toledo that Eleanor's matter-of-fact detective camera first played her false and led her into the byways of romance.

All through their tour the camera had been a source of delight to her and of annoyance to her father. He was proud of his daughter's skill, and glad to have the incidents of the trip recorded, but the mysterious little box was continually getting them into trouble with the custom-house officials and with people who objected to being photographed.

Eleanor had provided herself for the tour with two rolls of sensitized paper instead of the ordinary glass plates. Each roll was capable of containing one hundred negatives. The makers boasted the advantage of light weight and compactness for transportation, and Eleanor recognized the further convenience of not being obliged to develop her own negatives the contrivance allowing her to take view after view, and when the roll was filled to lay it aside for development and printing at some future day by a professional photographer.

It was through no fault of the makers, or of Eleanor's, that her anticipations of an abundant harvest of photographs were not realized. A suspicious officer on the frontier had insisted on examining the roll-holders, asserting that he suspected that they contained nitroglycerine, and that the camera was a neat little infernal machine. As exposing the rolls to the light would have utterly ruined them, Mr. Thurston labored long in his daughter's behalf with the obstinate official, and finally, with the assistance of a generous fee, succeeded in allaying his suspicions.

Later, a Moorish pedlar of curiosities in southern Spain, on comprehending that he had been photographed, insisted that the portrait should be destroyed. He was a most picturesque figure, in his white turban and flowing robe, and Eleanor was loath to part with her trophy. Her father made use of the same arguments which had proved so convincing in the case of the guardian of customs, but this time money was powerless. The fanatic believed that the portrait might craftily present itself before Allah and demand the soul laid up for him, and that when he died he would find himself defrauded of his immortality. His trouble was genuine, and Eleanor attempted to explain to him that as yet the portrait did not exist, and that it would never be developed. But his apprehensions and suspicions increased with every word, and he angrily snatched the plate-holder from her hands and deliberately unrolled the contents, destroying, in his search for his portrait, all of the photographs hitherto taken, the treasures of the experiences impossible to be replaced. Even then the Moor was only half satisfied; he seemed to think that the portrait, which he had not found, must be concealed in the camera, and Eleanor trembled for the instrument as he insisted on examining it thoroughly. She felt that it had escaped a great peril, and as the second roll remained, having been packed in her trunk, she was inclined to congratulate herself on coming out of the adventure so easily.

"I fear I shall have to confine myself to architecture," she remarked a few days later to her father. They were seated with their courier Antonio on the balcony of the inn at Toledo, and it happened by a strange coincidence that Thomas Winter, a young American journalist and magazine writer, who was also an amateur photographer, was stopping at the same hotel. As he intended remaining some time in Toledo, he had rented a story in a neighboring tower to serve as his workshop, but as Eleanor spoke he was finishing off a newspaper letter in a room whose blinds opened on the balcony where the party were gathered.

"Can you tell me, Antonio, of any

picturesque building in Toledo, or near it, which I could photograph?"

The question interested Winter, and he looked up from his article. Antonio promptly recommended the old cloister of San Juan de los Reyes as having been photographed by a Madrid professional. "Yes, I bought a photograph of it in Madrid," Eleanor replied. "We will go there, certainly; but is there not some other less-known edifice which has not been taken by any one else?"

Antonio thought a moment. "Would the Senorita like a view of the Tower of the Magians, a relic of the School of Magic for which Toledo was noted in the tenth century?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Thurston.

"The Senor is incredulous," said the courier coolly; "nevertheless it is quite true. When the Moors owned this part of Spain, long before Queen Isabella of blessed memory drove them into Africa, there was in this city a university for the study of the black art, and I have no doubt that Satan was one of the doctors. They played famous tricks in those days. Has the Senor never heard of them?"

"Young man," replied Mr. Thurston impressively, "reserve such flights of your imagination for English tourists; we are Americans."

"Antonio is right, Father," Eleanor remarked gently. "There was a school of alchemy here, though it was probably only chemistry; the prefix al, you know, means 'the.' I have been struck with the number of terms we have in chemistry which are derived from the Arabic. There are alcohol, alembic, aludel, alkali, and others; and almanac came to us, I presume, from the astronomer-magicians of the Giralda. I have a very deep respect for the learning of those old Saracens. I wish I knew just what experiments they tried in the old Tower of the Magians."

"I'll warrant it was only a good deal of hocus-pocus to mystify the unlearned," replied her father; "Greek fire for and the gold-transmuting philosopher's stone, the Saracen army, love philters, elixirs of life, and the gold-transmuting philosopher's stone, and that sort of humbug."

"It was not all imposture," Eleanor asserted confidently. "Greek fire was gunpowder, and they could dissolve gold with mercury and pierce red-hot iron with sulphur. I do not wonder that they believed in their own magical powers."

Thomas Winter, who had involuntarily overheard the conversation thus far, began to query what the personal appearance of the speaker might be. He was certain that she was far too learned to be young, and, as he thought her rather entertaining, he argued that Providence must have compensated for this good gift by denying her other attractions. Still, as the voice was a pleasant one, he admitted that she might be amiable. He felt grateful to her for having suggested to him a subject which he felt sure he could turn to account in a magazine article, "A University for the Study of Magic; or, the Alchemists of Toledo." What a taking title that would be! He would study up the records, and his imagination could supply the rest.

Her next remark interested him still more, for she touched upon his own hobby with an enthusiasm which he shared, but could not so well have expressed.

What could the old magians have thought of photographic chemistry?" she asked, evidently talking half to herself. "There is something positively uncanny and suggestive of the black art in the way that the image comes out upon a negative in the developing tray. Nothing which the alchemists did could have been more like the work of genii. By the way, what an excellent 'dark room' the tower we passed to-day would make. There is not a single window in its massive walls."

"Do you know I believe it was a developing room! The enchanter Geber may have worked there. We get our word algebra from a treatise on mathe-

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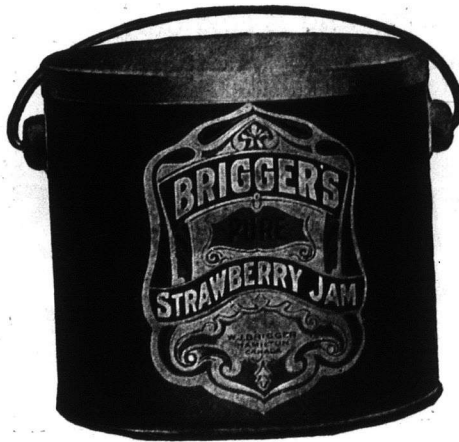
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