



CHAPTER I.—FOUND AND LOST.

BY W. H. BALLOU.

Author of "A Ride on a Cyclone," "The Bachelor Girl," "The Suellocrats,"



Happy I may not call thee, until I learn that thy life has been happily ended."

Thus soliloquized young Mr. Henry Marshall as he reclined, day dreaming, against the cushions of his seat in the forward section of a Wagner car.

The New York Central train was speeding him on and on, to which fact he was utterly oblivious.

He had secured the forward section to escape observation. He sat with his back to the passengers. Himself was companionable enough. He desired only to think and to dream.

He had but a few days since put Columbia College, so to speak, among his stock of reminiscences, with her highest honors in his trunk.

He had mentally given over his father's great manufacturing interests, which invited him to take immediate possession and give the aged sire his desired retirement, to the devil and the deep blue sea.

He loved his ideal best, his art next, the devil took what was hindmost. The ideal was now his quest; art he could achieve twelve times. It was of her he dreamed, his ideal.

As he sat there, gazing at the end of the car, deep in the contemplation of the yet unseen, but ever clearly outlined celestial ideal girl, with all the glamour of youth, the words of the great Socrates of yesteryear would thrust themselves between his thoughts and seize him like some grim specter: "Happy I may not call thee until I learn that thy life has been happily ended."

"Why need what old Socrates or any one else ever said concern me?" he mused. "What difference does it make what people say or who says it? A fact is a fact and a theory is a theory. One man's theory is as good for his own purposes as another's theory. The fact in my case is that I am satisfied to paint, notwithstanding dad's wrath and the business he would trust on me. Let dad earn the money, or who will; I desire only to spend it."

"So much for the fact. My theory is, and I prefer it to Socrates, that to improve my ideal

will be the means of happiness and will ensure a happy ending to my life. If I never find her, more or less of my life will be miserable and will end unhappily.

The young man failed to see that he had exactly confirmed his theory to Socrates that he had expressed the same theory precisely with variations in form only. Youth is deluded and ignores resemblances, those trifles which make Darwin immortal. He continued to muse:

"As an artist, my preferences run to browns. They are my favorite colors, because to me they are most beautiful, most quiet, most sincere and the least suggestive of either gladness or gloom. My dear, unseen, unknown love is a symphony in browns—brown hair, brown eyes and a complexion tinted brown rather than white or red.

"She is very small in stature, hence sure to be superbly perfect in form. Her little head is beautifully rounded and symmetrical, like-wise her dimpled arm and her sweet little hands. Her little feet are encased in child's boots, not larger than a child's number twelve. She is—"

He paused abruptly, startled, for he saw her. His eye had been wandering among the gorgeous capstries of the car, the beautifully wrought woodwork, the superb French plate-glass panes in the windows, the oil-painted ceilings and the beautiful gold-woven velvets of the cushions.

At last it rested on a mirror in front and above his head, that lightly inclined from the top towards him sufficiently to expose the entire car and all its occupants in dim image, dim because its curtain was drawn, darkening the light from the window at his side.

He thought several times to change his position to observe the annoyance; but he unconsciously shrank away from so doing. He was being slowly insensitized by a shadow as yet undetected, but in mentally growing more startling. He stared through the dim light at the mirror until his eyes became accustomed to the shadows above, and the picture among the other images gradually defined itself.

What he saw; that which would round and round him taken through of fascination, might have been reflected through a dozen mirrors from side to side and from end to end of the car.

Suddenly he turned and attempted to discover the original among the passengers. Failing in this, he again sought the mirror, giving himself entirely to the study of one dream image.

What he saw was the head and bust of a young girl. It so exactly conformed to the ideal of which he had dreamed so long that he came to feel the image must be a conception merely—a psychological ghost, as it were.

There was no dream fact, surely; the symphony in browns; the brown hair, every feature described as the most perfect gauze of a type—the large brown eyes, in which was the very soul of the loftiest conceivable intellect, the highest genius of music, perhaps; the complexion slightly tinted brown, but cut by the sweetest red lips; the evidently small stature and perfect form; the beautifully rounded and symmetrical head and dimpled arm.

He only lacked a glimpse of the feet to complete the spell of fascination, except, of course, the realization of his absorbing desire—possession. He closed his eyes an instant to more completely imagine it all a dream. Again he looked to revel in the picture, but alas! it was gone.



On the young man's face, when, to his almost unmitigated joy, the girl's all her ideal beauty slowly approached him in the aisle. His quick, artistic eye encompassed her form in a glance, embracing the picture. She had exquisite feet, encased in little boots not larger than a child's No. 12.

The girl hesitated, looking at him shyly, as if in doubt whether to proceed. Why, he could not for an instant imagine, but he afterwards attributed it to the fact that he actually devoured her, so far as one can devour a girl with the eyes. Her hesitation was but momentary, then she approached a small silver water-tank in the corner of the lobby near him.

He was on his feet in an instant. He sprang to the tank, his tall form bending until his eyes were on a level with hers and he gazed at her with that eagerness and intensity with which a starved nomad might look through a window on an epicure's dinner at Delmonico's.

"Permit me to assist you," he said gently, with diffident yet controlling adroitness to grasp her hand.

"Thanks, you are very kind," ventured the maiden, wondering at his eagerness and intensity of gaze.

He placed the silver goblet under the faucet, letting the liquid ooze out as slowly as possible while he continued his gaze like one in a dream of delight.

"The water is overflowing the goblet," surged the girl with an amused smile.

The man awoke confusedly, turned the water off and handed to her the cup. "Couldn't you let it run over a little while?" he asked, half impatiently. "The carpet will absorb it. I have been looking for you so long."

"Oh! certainly, if you wish," she interrupted. "But then, I am so thirsty, you know."

"And so am I," the man said wearily. "I was never so thirsty in my life."

"Then I advise you to take a drink," retorted the girl with a laugh, and she abruptly turned and left him.

To Be Continued.

LOOK OUT! for our final selections for the Municipal Stakes of 1891, next Saturday.