

and now here comes her birthday again, and I am going to mail that little frame to-night to New York, so that it will arrive on the 25th of the month. I think pearls will please here.'

The young man was so absorbed that he did not notice that Evelyn's face first flushed and then paled, and that her eyes were filled with unshed tears. With an effort she smiled and said: 'I think that it would be hard to please the person who would not be charmed with that frame—'

'Well, then, please wrap it up, and although I have not asked the price, I think I can pay for it.'

Evelyn named the price, and received a crisp new green-back.

As she busied herself wrapping the parcel, first in cotton, then in a dainty box, then in white tissue paper, then in brown tissue, he watched her graceful movements, noting her pure white brow, shaded by soft brown hair, her clear complexion heightened by his words, her small, well-shaped hands. And Ralph Edgwood thought what a lucky man he should be to win a wife like that! Suddenly she raised her eyes to his face, and her embarrassment became very evident. Ralph felt sorry, and yet glad.

'I wonder what I said,' he thought to himself. 'I hope I was not rude. Girls are so sensitive.'

But Evelyn had recovered herself, and with a graceful bow she gave him the change and parcel and moved away.

Ralph had no excuse to linger, so he went slowly from the store, his own brain in somewhat of a whirl. He scarcely heeded the little frame, which he transferred to his inside pocket as he walked slowly down the street.

But Evelyn? Her heart was in a tumult, and her face was burning as she fastened her hat at the mirror before she left for home. On her way home she stopped at the Cathedral, and made a fervent visit to the Blessed Sacrament; and after that she went over to the little altar of St. Anthony, to whom she had a special devotion, and prayed with all her soul that their lonely life might come to an end soon. She dreaded its effect on her brother, and with a true woman's tact she determined to leave nothing undone to brighten him by every means in her power. She had persuaded him to join her in a novena to her favorite saint, and to-day the novena ended. She could not understand the strange joy that thrilled her this evening, and she wondered if St. Anthony had not heard their prayers and interceded with God in their behalf. She was a little late getting home. George was there, and he ran to meet her. He, too, was laboring under stress of some emotion, but it did not prevent him from noting Evelyn's heightened color.

'What has happened to my little sister?' he asked. 'Can it be possible she has an inkling of the good news?'

'What good news?' asked Evelyn, who felt her heart jump at the query.

'Look!' And he took an official-looking document out of his pocket and slowly unfolded it.

'What on earth is this?'

'Simply this, my dear. Our beloved but capricious uncle has passed into another world most suddenly, and his lawyer announces to us that we are his heirs. Poor Uncle Dick! He meant well, if he only was not so cranky. But now, my pearl, gather up your traps. We are leaving Kansas by the midnight train!' And George actually turned a somersault in the little parlor.

Evelyn was momentarily dumb with amazement.

'What!' she stammered, and then, as if the thought just struck her, she said solemnly: 'George, do you know that this is the last day of our novena?'

'So it is! For the time being I had forgotten it. Well, if it is St. Anthony, he is a trump, and no disrespect to him. I am his truly to the end of my days. As for our good luck, see for yourself.' And George tossed her the paper, while he began an impromptu hornpipe, whistling his own music.

Having examined the document, Evelyn came back to earth.

'But it is 6 o'clock now,' she said, 'and how can I get my clothes packed? And there's the store and your office. What will they think of us?'

'Who cares what they think?' he replied. 'It has to be done. Heaven knows, we have not much to pack. Hustle around now, Pearl, and let's be out of this wild West before another day. We can easily write a line saying we are heirs to an estate and were telegraphed for, and of course they will forgive us. I've got last month's salary, and so have you, and we won't miss two weeks due us. Are you ready?'

Evelyn caught the infection of his spirits, and midnight found brother and sister on the train steaming eastward from Kansas. In due time they arrived in New York. Their uncle had been buried the day before. The house was closed, the old butler and cook having made themselves comfortable in the lower regions of the mansion. The rest of the servants had departed. The arrival of the heirs created not a little stir, but they were received with

joy and their old apartments prepared for them. Their uncle's lawyer soon came and explained how the old man had repented of his harshness, and made amends by leaving his brother's children all he had. He had hoped to see them before he died, but the end came suddenly. Gradually friends dropped in, all believing that the two young people had been abroad, and George and Evelyn did not enlighten them.

A few days after their arrival the butler came to Evelyn with a little parcel. 'This came by mail, Miss Evelyn. It got mislaid in the confusion.'

Evelyn opened it and found the little heart-shaped frame edged with pearls she had sold to the stranger in far-away Kansas. On a card were the words she knew so well, 'From George's chum.' She burst into tears, and the words of Ralph Edgwood came to her mind, 'Pearls signify tears.'

George came into the room while she was weeping, and was himself deeply affected by his college friend's loyalty and kindness.

'How strange that Ralph should keep up the old custom!' he exclaimed. 'I must hunt him up, Pearl, for you have never seen him. He is a splendid fellow. I infer he knows nothing of the turned-down page of our lives. Ah! that year in Kansas. But it made a man of me and a woman of you. We appreciate our heritage now. It is not very often that a man of twenty-two and a girl of twenty (yes, you were twenty last Monday; don't deny it!) have our experience. Why, look here, Pearl, this is post-marked "Kansas"! By George! If the name on the box is not your old firm's, Altemus and Co. Here is a mystery, and—you know all about it!'

Tell-tale smiles had begun to chase the tears on Evelyn's face.

'Out with it, dearie!'

'Yes, George, I sold that frame to your friend Ralph in Kansas City.'

'Jove! And did he know you?'

'Not at all. And you may be sure I did not reveal myself.'

'And of course he wouldn't dream that rich old Scrubbin's niece was a shop girl in Kansas City. But how did you know it was Ralph?'

'Well, he asked my advice about a gift for a friend's sister, and one link fell after another, and I, knowing all about it, had no trouble putting them together. He suspected nothing, though he did look hard at me and say I resembled a college chum of his.'

As Evelyn lived over the meeting with her 'last customer,' the warm blood rushed to her brow.

'Whew!' whistled George. 'I smell orange blossoms.'

'Now, George, for shame! No one thinks of such a thing. If we ever meet again, and he should fail to recognize me, promise me you will not tell the story.'

'It is too good to keep,' chuckled George.

'But promise me, brother,' persisted Evelyn.

'Sure,' said George. 'Mum's the word.'

'And we may never meet,' with a sigh.

'Don't you believe it. If Ralph is touched, he will go around the world till he meets you. He is a good fellow, clever, has money and brains, is a good Catholic, and, in fact, is just the man I would pick out for my sister's husband.'

'For mercy's sake, stop, George! You are awfully premature. Remember the circumstances.'

George whistled softly, and suddenly remembered he had an engagement.

Within a year Ralph Edgwood and Evelyn had met. Not unwillingly was Evelyn wooed and won, and on her bridal day Ralph threw a rope of exquisite pearls about her neck, saying: 'My pearl of pearls, you have broken the spell, for it has ever been said that "pearls signify tears." I have never believed it since a fair young girl, your very counterpart, sold me a year ago the little picture frame which now adorns your writing desk. I often think of her, Evelyn, when I look at you, for, except your own face and hers, no other ever attracted me. I saw her only once, behind that counter, but her face lived in my mind, and I determined that I should have just such a girl for my wife. And I have, only she is even more beautiful.'

Happy beyond her dreams, Evelyn hid her face on her husband's breast, tears gushing from her eyes.

'Take care, beloved,' he said, softly, caressing her brown hair, 'pearls and tears, you know.'

She lifted her face, radiant with joy.

'Tears,' she whispered, 'yes, but such happy tears.'

And then, with his strong protecting arms around her, she told him all about that hidden chapter in her life, when she was a shop girl in Kansas, and how she met him on the last day of her novena.

'We must love St. Anthony to the end of our days,' said Ralph, kissing her tenderly.—*Catholic Standard and Times.*