

**A STORY OF MANY
COLORS, OR, ROMANCE
IN A LODGING-HOUSE**

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A Story of Many Colors

CHAPTER I

MR. THORNDYKE B. WHYTE, a young man, one and twenty or thereabouts, was one of a company of pleasure seekers at Nantasket Beach. By his side stood a maiden, whose natty appearance, fresh color and dainty movements disturbed yet delighted him. Every nice girl has an unconscious power of affecting a great many folks, young and old, in this sort of way, and this girl was a very nice girl indeed.

After regarding her for some time in silence and trying in vain to catch her eye, he remarked in a tone that sounded somewhat like a challenge: "A fine day, Miss Brown?"

The note of interrogation in the speaker's voice compelled a reply and the young girl, in a feminine superlative set him at his ease and confirmed him in his carefully considered opinion. He was consoled. She had spoken to him and she was not a girl who spoke very much to anybody. He could afford to relapse into taciturnity and the narrow range of his little world of self. He drew forth a cigarette and lit it with placid satisfaction. There were very few fellows that Miss Brown entered into conversation with, hardly one in fact, except that incorrigible old monologist, Caleb A. Black,

and another, a bearded fellow, who seemed to worship the very ground she trod on. Mr. Whyte did not mind old Black, a man of sixty, but the bewhiskered personage irritated him because he was a much younger, although a staid looking man, and on the present occasion had been permitted to carry her luncheon basket. Turning his head a little to keep the smoke from annoying her, he espied the object of his dislike seated on the sands near the young girl's mother and a group of persons, whose names may as well be given here by way of introduction.

Besides Mrs. Brown there were two ladies, one, an elderly spinster, Miss Leah Philopoena Gray, the other, a lively milliner, Miss Sophy Scarlett. Besides the gentleman with the hirsute honors, who may be designated as "The man in the Background" (M. I. B. G.), there were Caleb A. Black and two students, Rondibilis C. Blue (called Rondy Blue, for short) and Galen D. Green, his *Fidus Achates*.

Mrs. Brown, a good-natured, stout, optimistically-minded sort of body faced a luncheon basket and ate and drank with vigor if not with precision. Miss Leah P. Gray, attenuated, sharp of feature, irreproachable in dress, exceedingly communicative and perpetually trying to do something for everybody to set them at their ease, as it were, pressed the comestibles, with a running commentary on the merits of such as were of home manufacture, upon the attention of her guests.

Sophy Scarlett, vivacious, coquettish, sprightly, modish, with a hat like a flower garden, and

shoulders spread out as if in the support of the huge superstructure, kept her feathers in constant vibration as she talked, apparently, to everybody at once.

Caleb A. Black, of most decorous demeanor, looked in the direction of Plymouth Rock with meditative gaze, pondering on the advent of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620, and mentally comparing the configuration on the map to a gigantic hand and arm ready to seize upon the poor exiles and endow them with new life drawn from the generous bosom of Massachusetts.

Rondy Blue and Galen Green, long-haired and with indications of having drunk very sparingly at the Pierian Spring as yet, were dressed in tweed suits and flat caps and jostled each other and laughed and said smart things with the zest that belongs to the period of self-satisfied adolescence.

Of the M. I. B. G. it behooves us for the present to say little more than that his capillary appendages enshrouded him with a dervish-like gravity. Mr. Thorndyke B. Whyte did not give expression to his feelings as he sulkily turned his gaze back to the smooth, peach-like face at his side, but smoked his cigarette with an energy little short of vindictive. Some smoke, consequently, was wafted across the sensitive nostrils of his little neighbor, as the wind blew in that direction, and was the occasion of a remonstrative little cough. "You would never make a smoker," said the young man.

"No, indeed; it appears to me to be so unnatural. What did men do before tobacco was dis-

covered? And as for the appearance of the thing, I think a pipe or a cigar spoils the beauty of the handsomest face ever seen."

"Handsomest face?" What did she mean? Mr. Whyte was vain, inordinately vain. He experienced no difficulty in assuming that his own was the "Handsomest face ever seen." "If you put it in that way, Miss Brown, here goes," and he threw away his cigarette, to the delight of small boys who had a lively scramble for it.

A quizzical expression irradiated the girl's features for a moment. "I should indeed be sorry if, perhaps, my silly prejudices interfered with your pleasure. But I must own to a number of odd ideas. I cannot imagine, for instance, why people should drink unless they are thirsty. I think it is so very unnatural." More food for reflection. This was certainly a very original young lady. That very day he had imbibed a Manhattan cocktail which, under this view of things, he felt he had no reasonable warrant for taking.

He recalled with remorse his reflected image, the image of the "handsomest face ever seen," as he gracefully crossed his feet, his elbow resting on the bar, and smiled, Narcissus-like, at the fair view presented in the large mirror facing him.

Crisp in speech and to the point, of a practical and reasoning character, rather than imaginative or sentimental, Euphemia's unimpassioned intercourse with various suitors whom she entirely failed to understand, and who, it is almost needless to add, failed to understand her, no pledges of any