

5 Cents.

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

JANUARY 1897.



Contents.

- AS A PHANTOM FLEETING,
Jessie Bartlett Davis.
- SIMPSON'S BAD LUCK, - - Ed. Mott.
- NOT ROMANTIC, - - John Lawrence.
- MARSE CHET'S DUEL, - - Geo. F. Lyon.
- THE GENTLEMAN FROM ARIZONA,
Arthur Pottow.
- MRS. MURPHY'S STUFFED TURKEY,
Ernest Jarold.
- HOW MRS. CAUSELY "CALLED" THE
BLUEBELLS, - - W. H. Neall.

FRANK TOUSEY

34 & 36
NORTH MOORE ST.
NEW YORK.

AS A PHANTOM FLEETING

BY JESSIE BARTLETT DAVIS.



GT was in one of the twentieth streets, far over on the East side, that Genaro, the sculptor, lived. A noisome neighborhood, where huge, gaunt tenements fester amid gas tanks, factories, coal and lumber yards. Up from the gullets of the sewers that pour into the river, floats the miasma of New York, which induces the vigorous brawn that enables the gamins who bathe there to become handsome policemen at twenty-four.

On the top floor of the ricketiest rear house of them all, Genaro carved among other subjects his own humble career. Genaro, tall, lithe, tawny, who had inherited his complexion from the muddy banks of the Tiber; and Genaro's wife, who used to sell flowers and confetti in the shadow of St. Peter's. Genaro's baby, also, whose "vast and wondrous dome" was the Jumbo tank of the River Gas Company.

It was Sunday morning in raw November, and Mrs. Genaro, released from her toil of the week, slept heavily in the inner room, heedless of the rattling sash that brawled with the fierce gale from the shore. She worked from seven in the morning till nearly nine at night, as cashier in a quick-lunch restaurant, whose myriad mirrors and clattering dishes often turned her pretty, tired head dizzy. She was well regarded by her employers who, once in a while, allowed her the great trust of presenting pay-to-bearer checks at their bank. She was ogled by all the dyspeptic pie-eating clerks, and rather sniffingly surveyed by the tea-sot salesladies and typists, who could not suffer her Madonna face and ravishingly languorous eyes. Poor little beauty!

While she lay all snuggled up in the threadbare quilt, Genaro in the next room was modeling with his long, flat fingers a female bust. It was the figure of a young girl, wearing a wide-spreading hat, that seemed to shadow her face and make the hollow orbits of her eyes deeper and more beautifully mysterious, the mouth curving in an innocent smile at once tempting and alluring.

It was such a face as one sees daily on Broadway or Twenty-third street, guarded by those picturesque peddlers from the land of ruins who never seem to have any purchasers.

There were a dozen or more copies of this piece carefully arranged along the mantel and on the stone in front of a dismally suggestive hollow grate.

With one foot, half penetrating his straw slipper, Genaro jogged a clumsy cradle, in which the baby whined and chirruped by turns, according as he bit his rubber-ring or the tip of his tiny red tongue.

Rafaelo the baby was teething.

In ten minutes the model had to be laid aside for the baby, who was squalling most piteously.

Genaro paced up and down to quiet him lest his weary mother should awaken. Tranquilly Rafaelo began to tug at his sire's silken mustache. His lip was almost in a fever, but Genaro only swore musically under his breath and softly closed the door of the bedroom. Then he continued his tiresome trot till a knock brought him to a halt.

"Come in," he replied in his suave, Southern tones.

At once there entered a tall, muscular man, warmly wrapped in a long ulster, the mere sight of which made Genaro for the moment forget that the temperature of his abode was just forty degrees.

The newcomer unbuttoned his coat and lowered his collar, meanwhile half seating himself on the plain deal table. His oldish, shaven countenance, was strong, but not at all handsome. Yet, he had about him that exquisite, ruddy crisp air of one of those privileged human beings who are bathed and massaged by a valet once in each twenty-four hours.

Genaro was not slow to recognize the type. He had studied it often while wandering in meditation and hunger in the region of Madison Square. The baby—precocious, pretty, prattling, as the children of over-young and loving parents generally are—seemed profoundly interested. He forgot that he was teething, and gazed at the stranger in silence.

The latter, whose eyes had been regarding somewhat oddly the numerous copies of the female bust, while he turned his slouch hat nervously in his hands, at last spoke in a constrained, though not unpleasant voice.

"Did you make those?" he inquired, pointing with a jerky gesture to the busts.

"Yes," the sculptor answered huskily, wholly mystified by the stranger's peculiar manner.

"Then I would like to speak with you," the other added.

Genaro, with a qualm in his unbreakfasted stomach, asked himself what mischance had befallen him now.

"You'll excuse my familiarity, I hope," the stranger went on as he drew forth a silver cigarette case and proffered it to the Italian.

Reassured a little, the latter took a cigarette, and then availed himself of the match which his visitor also offered from a silver case.

Grazia di dio! this man seemed lined with silver, and at this moment there were just six red sulphur matches in the tin box by the kitchen stove.

"You've got a child," resumed the stranger, after a puff that seemed to invigorate him; "wife, no doubt, and altogether a home, though not a luxurious one," and he glanced about with a shrug at the desolate apartment. "You won't laugh then, I think, when I tell you that I'm in love—really in love, not fancy-smitten or befooled by the coquetry of a pair of eyes or naked shoulders, will you?"

"No, signor," answered the sculptor, with a start, but it was because the baby made a sudden leap backwards.

"Thank you," returned the other, in a lower tone, and letting his chin fall rather shamefacedly. "It was about six months ago, on a Saturday, that I went to the Cosmopolis Bank to draw on my business account. By the way, have you ever been in there? Do you know where it is?"

"I don't," the sculptor answered, laconically, as he patted Rafaelo soothingly, who was fast tiring of the stranger's keen, gray-eyed visage.

"After all, it's immaterial. I need only tell you that the main window of the paying-teller is on a right angle from the ladies' window. As I was handing in my check I looked up, and beheld at the opposite window the most mysteriously beautiful face of a woman my eyes ever saw. She was receiving cash from the second teller and in an instant had vanished.

"Mind, my view of her was but limited. I could see her just vaguely behind the grating, and I imagined she was looking at me. The same thing had happened twenty times before with other faces; but now I begged the teller to hurry my change. I rammed it all into my pockets like so much newspaper and hastened around to the ladies' department.

"She had gone!"

"Out in the street I went, up and down each block, always eager, impatient, resolved to rediscover her, and yet hardly sure I would be able to recognize if I saw her.

"It was twelve o'clock when I left the bank, it was four when I ceased searching and went home disconsolate.

"For weeks I haunted Union Square but unavailingly. Then business called me to Paris. I was glad to get away, hoping to forget those marvelous burning eyes, that saintly face that seemed more angelic than womanly.

"It seems ridiculous, I know, yet it's true, that once when sipping my liquor at a cafe, brilliant with light and laughter and women's jewels and their eyes, will you believe it, that I fancied I saw that face shooting swiftly past me on the street. I followed it for twenty minutes, hoping and hopeless, and then finally came back to my rooms still seeking, tired, dead tired of seeking.

"It has come up before me in my dreams resembling a picture I once saw in Rome, and I have confounded the vision of Raphael with the reality, the fleeting, mocking, shadow reality of my heart."

The visitor had dropped his cigarette smouldering to the floor. He was standing half inclined towards Genaro, who trembled at his vehemence and patted the baby most assiduously to prevent an outcry.

"Sit down," continued the stranger more calmly, noticing the pale quivering sculptor, tottering, as it seemed, beneath the swaying weight of the baby.

Genaro helped himself to the only four-legged chair he had.

"Seeing that I could not rid myself of this glorious, heart-ruining phantom," resumed the stranger, "I was almost glad to return to New York, where at least I might haunt Union Square in hopes of recovering her.

"The first thing almost that struck my sight was this bust," he had taken one of them in his hands and was gazing at it in a kind of fierce rapture. "It appeared to me almost insane that I should find a resemblance in the bit of plaster up for sale in the doorway of an empty store. And yet it was so like her, I began to think my obsession had set a nerve in my brain ajar. But again I could not help but recognize the same superb pose of the neck, the delicate aspirate nostrils tinted like pink shells.

"I inquired of the peddler who had made the piece. He did not

know and referred me to the wholesale jobbers, who in turn directed me to you.

"I feel happy now, I almost foretaste the bliss of meeting with the woman whose shadow I have pursued for six months with a heart full of fire. I'll buy every single bit you can make of her. I'll be the means of your fortune and fame, for I have the power to do it, and all I ask in return is to know where I may find this girl who has maddened me, that I may reach her, seize, possess her."

He stopped abruptly and stammered under his breath:

"God, how I love her!"

With this his lips dropped in a swift passionate kiss on the half-opened mouth of the statue. Then suddenly recalling himself he glanced up apologetically towards the sculptor.

"Jesu Christo!" screamed Genaro, in a very volcano of rage as he pitched the baby into the cradle as if it were a wooden doll.

Rafaelo emitted a piercing yell when his tender little skull cracked against the side of his bed, and before either of the men could change their expression of mutual perplexity, the door was flung open and Genaro's wife flew in, her eyes bloodshot from her rudely awakened slumber, her long ebony tresses flowing down over her bared neck and breast.

"My darling," she screamed, rushing to the cradle and catching up Rafaelo's sobbing form.

She had seen nothing but the cradle, and her child in pain. Now as she turned in full view of the stranger a hot blush started in the blue veins of her throat and overspread her face the hue of a blood orange.

The stranger staggered against the mantle knocking down one of the busts which crashed loudly at his feet. But he did not seem to take note of that. He remained tottering, waving his hand impotently before his eyes like a man struggling against the effects of a drug.

Genaro, appreciating his distress, motioned to his wife, who retired nestling the convulsive infant to her bosom and inwardly marveling at this miracle.

"Mr. Genaro," gasped the stranger, recovering after a few moments. "I—I humbly beg your pardon."

His voice fell almost to a gasp, and the last word came from his lips as with the agony of one dying. He held out his hand, which the sculptor took tremblingly.

Then he hesitated, as if seeking some sentence, sign or means

of expressing the tumult of astonishment, regret, repentance, desolation that swirled in his soul like a maelstrom.

Once or twice his lips parted as if to speak, but no sound issued from them. Taking his hat, he drew it down firmly over his brow, and as he opened the door, noticed the broken bust.

"Let me pay for that," he murmured in a pleading tone, meanwhile drawing forth a banknote.

Genaro hung back unwillingly.

"Then let me at least make the baby a present," he added, swiftly dropping the bill, and as instantly his tall, ulstered form shot from the room like a shadow.