

The Lost Chance

By Mrs. ARTHUR A. BECKETT

She was seated in the garden of the hotel, a mass of chiffon, auburn hair, flowing draperies, open-worked stockings, and brown, high-heeled shoes. On her knees lay a sketch of the snow-capped mountains as seen from the distance. Drawing was the chief accomplishment in which she excelled.

"I feel beautiful, Spot," said she, addressing her faithful fox terrier, who wagged his tail intelligently in response to her remarks. "I feel beautiful, and also pleased, for am I not gowned for table d'hôte? No more dressing to-day, my dear Spot. How do you like my frock?"

"It's not my only—I have better still, And what you see is but my deshabille."

"It is a pity, isn't it, Spot, that there's no one to see me but you, the mountains, the lake and the buzzing flies?"

The sun had just touched the luxuriant red brown hair with a deeper, richer tint when Miss Amos became conscious that two tourists, Anglaises decidedly, were coming across the gravel path.

"Col. Ashmore, by all that I'm worth," she murmured to herself. "And another; I wonder who he is. Col. Ashmore! What shall I do? It's the first time I've seen him since I refused him. Down, Spot, down! Don't add to my discomfort by making that horrible row."

Yes, it was the gallant D. S. O. Evelyn Amos had of late questioned herself very frequently as to the sanity or insanity of rejecting such a desirable offer—distinguished, rich, and, moreover, a most agreeable man. She could never satisfactorily answer herself.

What was the good of marrying a man with whom all the rest of the women were in love? Why should she follow the common, senseless herd? She, a beauty and an heiress!

Barbara Montgomery, Evelyn's particular friend, had judiciously pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of such a matrimonial venture, and in her summing up the former considerably outbalanced the latter. Evelyn thought Barbara's suggestion vulgar when she quoted the hackneyed saying that "There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it." This did not seem to her pertinent as applied to herself and Col. Ashmore. The idea that perhaps he would console himself in a richer and more beautiful direction Evelyn repudiated with disdain.

"More beautiful!" She was vain enough to think that with auburn hair undyed, fair complexion non-massaged, perfect figure, feet and hands, she could carry the world before her; in fact, she was proud of anything and everything that belonged to that marvelous vision of beauty, Evelyn Amos.

And who was Barbara to preach that Eustace Ashmore would soon fly to some one more appreciative and congenial? Barbara, a commonplace little creature, who could scarcely string together a couple of sentences grammatically. Had not she, Evelyn, been the belle of every place she had honored with her presence? Fly from her, indeed! What nonsense; and here was a proof.

So on this glorious June day when Col. Ashmore stood beside her she felt no sort of surprise whatever. What more natural than that this man, who a season and a half ago had been her veriest slave, should now have returned to his allegiance? Here he was on the very first available opportunity hurrying to meet her again. Gratitude made her eyes sparkle, although she flattered herself that she looked as if she saw no one for whom she felt the slightest interest.

"I am delighted to meet you, Miss Amos," said Col. Ashmore. He was not in the least nervous, but then men don't carry their hearts on their coat sleeves—this was Evelyn's comforting reflection.

"I heard you were coming to Lausanne," he continued, extending his hand. Evelyn, condescendingly offered hers and at the same time wondered why she had never realized before the charm of this man's personality. Many of the sterner sex look well in their silk hats, frock coats and smart dress suits; this man in whatever clothes he wore seemed exactly suited to the place and the hour.

"No need, Miss Amos, to ask how you are?"

Evelyn smiled most graciously, fully aware that the accommodating sun was still lighting with its golden hue her oceans of chestnut hair. "This is my cousin Norton," he continued. "Mr. Herman Norton is like yourself, a painter, and you two ought to become great friends."

But Evelyn could only think of the tall, upright man before her. Had he ever asked her to marry him? Had she dared refuse him? Surely she must have dreamed this episode of her career—it could not be true. Could he ever forgive her bad taste and the harm it must have done him? After all it had only been bravado. Now—well, it would have been a brave person who would have dared to have said anything in his deprecation in her presence.

Barbara Montgomery's words occurred to her. "Eustace Ashmore is as good as he is handsome, as true as he is tall, a man absolutely devoid of swagger and conceit."

She agreed with Barbara and thought so, too. Absence often works wonders in making us remember as well as forget, and Evelyn had of late remembered a great deal, and now Eustace was beside her once again—of his own accord.

She had been abroad with her maiden aunt, Miss Milman, and they had been traveling incessantly for a year and three months—their last stay was in Sicily. They had heard little of their friends and their affairs, as both Evelyn and her aunt had taboored all correspondence, so for the space of fifteen months they had been practically out of the world that finds its boundaries in London life.

Now they were both en route home and beginning to hear the echoes of the park. Her heart was full, for she realized that she was near the man of all others she most desired to see. "Eustace the Rejected," as Barbara laughingly had christened him, was at her side to bid her welcome back.

"Because I was a fool once," she thought, there is no reason why I should be a fool again, and, thank goodness, it is easy to say yes or no. Everything comes to him or her—what is it?—who waits."

Pleasantly conscious that her mind was fully made up she turned to respond to Herman Norton's brainy tittle-tattle on art and books, thinking to herself that he was a good civilian copy of his military cousin.

Presently the boom of the dinner gong sounded across the sward. Col. Ashmore shook his limbs as he got up from his seat, remarking: "How well you draw, Miss Amos; that's a capital castle."

"That's not a castle, you duffer," laughed Herman, as he offered to relieve Col. Ashmore of Evelyn's sketch. "That's the large hotel on the hill at Evian les Bains over yonder."

"Oh, I thought it was the castle of Chillon. I wondered at it having raised itself to such an exalted position so many miles above the level of the lake or sea."

Laughingly they made their way toward the Beau Rivage, mutually pleased with one another and more than pleased with their individual selves. Herman Norton wondered how it was that Eustace had not spoken much in praise of this handsome and clever girl. He was himself quite in a fair way to succumb to her fascinations. Evelyn was telling herself that it was natural that Eustace should wish her to be in rapport with his relatives; never in her life had she felt so happy and so much at ease.

As they entered the hotel and mounted the parapet they were joined by some one else. A vision in a white frock, blue sash, curly black hair, a net reticence and laughing brown eyes. "You truant, you will be dreadfully late for dinner. Oh, you've found Evelyn, have you?" The brown-eyed girl made a dash at her blue-eyed friend and demonstratively embraced her.

"Barbara!"

Evelyn Amos was genuinely surprised.

"Who ever expected to see you here of all people in the world? Is it really Barbara, or her astral body?"

"I am no astral body, Evelyn, but very much alive. Are you not surprised to see Eustace?"

"Indeed I was."

Col. Ashmore had descended the steps. Evelyn turned away to hide her tell-tale countenance, which she feared might reveal to Barbara the joy she felt in meeting her old admirer again.

L'amour ne se commande pas. "Of course, he has told you?" and Barbara scampered down the stairs, following in the wake of the admired Colonel.

"Told me what?" and Evelyn looked toward Herman Norton inquiringly.

"I suppose she meant my cousin's marriage, but, of course, you knew he was married a year ago?"

"Married! Married!"

"And whom has he married?"

"Barbara."

Paderewski Not Lucky Poker Player. One of Boston's foremost musicians was speaking: "Paderewski is a great pianist, but he is also a great poker player—a fact that very few people seem to be aware of. He's a great poker player, that in the sense that he is immensely enthusiastic, for he certainly has no great luck at the game, though he calls it the best sport in the world and never misses a chance to play, in spite of the experience which must have taught him by this time that he almost invariably loses."

"I've played at the same table with him just once, but I never shall forget that evening. A Beacon Street millionaire had given a musicale at his home and Paderewski had presided at the piano for something like an hour; we were all of us wondering what he had been paid, I remember. Now the host is an enthusiast in the great American game, and somehow Paderewski heard this. Wherefore he proposed a game, and when he was told that American gentlemen never play for money with their guests, he was so keenly set up, as well as so insistent, that in the end a table was formed, and somewhere along about 1 o'clock we began to play. We stopped about daybreak, with Paderewski more than five thousand dollars less than he began with."

"But then it was a cheap game for the musician, as our host told me later that he had received \$4,000 for playing the piano."

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