

# HERSHEY



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### Three Meetings

By F. A. MITCHEL

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Three times I saw her, three times I gazed upon her, each time being drawn nearer to her before I knew her sorrow.

I was riding on a railroad train to my home in the suburbs of a great city when looking up I saw a girl who faced me gazing at me with a pair of large brown eyes. There was in her face something like sadness, but not sadness, rather the appearance of one born under different conditions from other mortals—a resignation, yet a contentment in resignation. I have tried by these words to describe it, but am conscious of having failed.

Though her eyes were fixed upon me, there was no boldness in them. Rather she seemed unconscious of meeting my gaze. Perhaps, I thought, she is thinking of something so absorbing that though she is looking straight at me she does not see me, or it may be that she is looking at something beyond me. I have often returned a salute from a person who meant it for one behind me. So I continued to gaze at the girl and she at me till she turned her face in another direction.

She was sitting by a lady double her age, and the likeness between them indicated that they were mother and daughter. Presently the train stopped at a station, and the two left the car together. I had noticed by the affectionate glances the mother gave the

daughter that she idolized her, and when they passed out it was hand in hand.

I did not forget the face, and a year later I saw it again. This time it was in a church. She was, as before, accompanied by her mother. I was sitting in a transept; the girl was facing the pulpit. There was the same look, indescribable in words, that had impressed me twelve months ago. Her gaze was fixed on the clergyman, though occasionally she would drop it as though looking into her lap. There was in me a vague feeling—something like a hope—that when I had seen her on the train she had been, at least a part of the time, looking at me, cognizant of my presence; that she had remembered me as I remembered her. I watched to see if she would not look in my direction. Just before the close of the services I was rewarded by seeing her turn, and her eyes rested upon me. I looked for something to indicate that she was conscious of my presence and that she had seen me before. But there was only that strange look of resignation I had seen before. After the benediction she and her mother left the church in the same manner as they had left the train.

The third meeting. Having a law case I was waiting in the courtroom for it to be tried. A criminal case was called—that of Evelyn Bryce. Who should come into court to answer to the charge of forgery but the girl I had seen twice before. She came hand and hand with her mother.

Naturally I was wrapped in the trial. The prisoner's attorney was evidently trying to prove a conspiracy on the part of certain persons against his client. When he made a point in her favor or her case appeared to be going against her I looked to see what effect it had upon her. I could see very

little. I was not sure that I could see any. I noticed that the jury—indeed, all those in the courtroom—were looking at her; that they seemed as much impressed with that look of mingled resignation and content as I.

The defendant's counsel exhibited the document that the girl was accused of forging and showed that the name had been written on the line intended for it without the raising or depression of a single letter and without incline either up or down.

"You see, gentlemen of the jury," he said. "that whoever wrote that name must have written it in a bright light, must have written with a pair of eyes that worked thoroughly in concert, for there are defects of eyesight that cause persons so affected to write slanting the lines downward or upward."

"I presume," interrupted the prosecuting attorney, "that defendant's counsel proposes to prove that his client has the defect he mentions. I would call your honor's attention to the fact that the prisoner has a very beautiful pair of eyes. Indeed, I greatly fear that she is using them upon the jury with a view to securing her acquittal."

The accused's counsel received in silence for a few moments this attempt to prejudice the court and the jury against his client. Then he said:

"The prosecuting attorney is mistaken, your honor. I am not intending to prove that my client has this especial defect. I would for her sake that it had pleased her Creator to give her this defect instead of the one with which she is afflicted. Gentlemen of the jury, my client is unable to cast upon you glances calculated to excite your sympathy any more than she could have seen to write her name exactly on the line in that document, for she

is stone blind."

The effect produced on the court by this announcement rendered any further process of law unnecessary. The jury without leaving their seats acquitted the accused, and I now knew why when she and her mother left the courtroom they went hand in hand.

This is but the beginning of a story in which I have been long and am still deeply interested.

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