

A Detective's Mistake

About two months ago, says the Virginia City (Nev.) *Chronicle*, a young lawyer of this city, and his newly acquired wife, were returning from a visit to the bay. Wearied a trifle with constant billing and cooing, the young husband made some feeble excuse or other and slipped off to the smoking car to burn a cigar and think with a sigh of the departed bachelor days when he could spit out of the window over his boot-toes, with none to say, "Oh please, Steve, dear, don't."

The bride, with rather an injured expression, was sitting in her palace car, musing on the waning ardor of her Stephen, when she suddenly discovered that she was the center of attraction to the whole car. Two rough-looking men were standing in the aisle, gazing at her closely, and then referring to a paper which one held in his hands. Before the astonished and indignant lady could collect her thoughts, one of the men took the vacant seat beside her, and with a knowing wink, observed:

"A good get-up, Nancy, but it won't do. You're copped dead to rights this time, honey."

"Sir!" gasped the frightened lady, shrinking back into the furthest corner.

"By the big stick," said the man admiringly, "Nance, you'd ought to a gone on the stage. I never see any thing better done. But it won't do. You've got to come back with us, Nance, an' you stand a mighty good chance of goin' over the bay for life at shortest."

"Sir, what do you mean?" demanded Mrs. ———, thoroughly alarmed and starting to her feet. "Will no gentleman protect me from the insults of this fellow?"

Half a dozen gentlemen sprang forward at this appeal.

"Gentlemen," said the man "[just] 'tend to' your own business, and I'll 'tend to mine. I've been hunting this bird for two months or more, and I've got her at last. She puts on a good deal of style, but if you've ever heard of Nance Brown, one of the 'cutest thieves on the coast, here she is. I'd have taken her quietly, but if she wants to make a row, it's her own business. I'm Detective ———, and here's my warrant."

"Oh this is intolerable," cried the poor lady, bursting into tears of indignation and shame. "Gentlemen, my husband, Mr. ———, is on the train. Go find him, for heaven's sake!"

There presently appeared about the wildest lawyer outside of Stockton. The detectives grinned at the vehement explanations of the husband, and the other officer warned him to be quiet or he would arrest him for interfering. Fortunately there were several Virginians on the train, and they at once identified the lawyer as a respectable citizen, though the marriage being recent they had not known the lady.

The detectives were profuse in their apologies, and got out of the car in double-quick order, looking more sheepish than any thief-takers have a right to look, and swearing that it was the strongest resemblance they had ever seen.

Denison [TX] Daily News, September 12, 1875

Davenport [IA] Gazette, November 6, 1875—with the subtitle “A New Wife in a Bad Situation”