

THE EUREKA ALPHABET

By FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS.

The beauties of a perfect May afternoon and of the majestic mountains did not interest Tom Baldwin as he spurred his horse along the Uncomphagre Trail which connects Ironport with Ourry. Years of prospecting in Colorado had saturated the sturdy and handsome young miner with scenery.

"A letter should be there by this time," he muttered for the hundredth time as he neared the little town of Ourry. "I am surely due for a change of luck. I've got to win; that's all there is to it."

On reaching the hotel he threw the bridle over the horse's head, vaulted lightly to the ground, and bristled back of the neck. The clerk was not back of the office. Tom Baldwin stood in front of it and looked eagerly at the "B" box. There was one letter in it. Was it for him? He was meditating a leap over the barrier when the clerk appeared.

"Is that letter mine, Jack?" impatiently demanded Tom Baldwin, not for a moment taking his eyes from it.

Lazily the clerk turned to the boxes and took from its place the letter which had so riveted Baldwin's attention. With a careless glance at the address he handed it to the new arrival.

"It came this morning," he said.

Tom Baldwin ripped off the envelope, and as he read a flush of pleasure came to his face.

The letter which thus excited the owner and discovered of the Little Uncomphagre mine in the hills back of Telluride read as follows:

Office of Briscoe & Storey,
New York City, May 2,
1909.

Dear Sir: A letter from London informs us that Anglo-American Mining Company will consider the purchase of your Little Uncomphagre mine if you will reduce your price from \$200,000 to \$100,000. We advise you to do so, and also suggest that you use the services of our representative, who will shortly for this city. Please see our circular, also advise us when you are ready to proceed. Very truly yours,
R. F. BRISCOE.

He went to a seat on the veranda and again read the letter.

"That means that the dearest little woman whom I will be married in Denver on the 12th next September," Tom Baldwin reflected. "I was beginning to fear that we'd have to wait, but now I've got a photograph in my hand of the two of us sitting on the deck of a steamship as they sailed past Gibraltar and heads for those isles we used to see in the school geographies."

The Little Uncomphagre was a property requiring considerable money for its proper development, and until now the good fortune which favored others in interesting investors seemed bent on tantalizing Baldwin by dangling capital before his eyes, only to flip it out of reach when he grasped for it.

His parents were dead, and the settling of his father's estate left the boy with a few thousand dollars and a theoretical knowledge of mining acquired in an Illinois technical school. Baldwin had no wealthy relatives and no influential mentors, but he had youth, strength, good looks, ambition, and daring—a little too much of the latter, perhaps. He went to Denver, obtained a foothold there, and then tempted fate by falling wildly in love with Florence Reeves. The reckless nature of this infatuation is manifested when it is told that the paternal Reeves was a well-to-do banker, and by the further fact that the son and heir of a smelter magnate was pursuing a desperate court to this charming daughter of Colorado.

To the surprise of Denver social circles, the dismay of the banker and his wife, and to the sorrow and chagrin of the young millionaire suitor, Tom Baldwin, whose fortune yet lay hidden in the mountains to the west, easily won favor in the eyes of Florence Reeves.

The parents of this fair young lady sagely humored her when to study painting and bundled her off to New York with the shrewd purpose of placing in the width of a continent between her and the young mining engineer. Tom plunged into the mountains, and after many experiences and disappointments discovered the rich ore of the mine he later named the Little Uncomphagre. For a year and more he and Florence had exchanged letters which increased in length, frequency, and ardor, but when the ore was tested he wrote a triumphant one which insisted that his fortune was within his grasp. He declared his undying love, asked for her in return, and begged her to name the day—all in one letter, inspired by the discovery of an innocent-appearing streak of rock at the far end of a long and black tunnel.

Of course, Florence did not grant all these fervid appeals at once, but Tom finally received for a Christmas present the tender promise which made him supremely happy, and it was arranged that the wedding should be celebrated on her twentieth birthday, September 12. Whereupon Florence returned to New York and set her art and Tom to his search for an investor with faith in the future of the Little Uncomphagre.

Finally the representative of Briscoe & Storey was induced to make an investigation, and after many delays negotiations were opened with London capitalists, with the eventual sending of the letter which lifted Tom Baldwin's hopes to the seventh heaven.

Beautiful were the castles he built in those days, pining his journey to New York, and as the train bore him swiftly toward the metropolis he added new domes and minarets to that splendid collection of traffic edifices.

Tom took out his wallet and laughed as he counted its contents—\$610. It was all the money he had in the world, but it was enough. He was well satisfied with his shrewdness in leading Briscoe & Storey to believe in his affluence. He had even threatened to call off all negotiations and proceed to pay \$100,000, some such absurd amount, of his own money in a stamp mill and in the further development of the mine.

"Thomas Baldwin, Denver, Colo.," was the inscription which appeared on the register of one of New York's great hotels on May 15. He was in no hurry to call on Briscoe & Storey. It was well to give them to understand that a little matter like \$200,000 did not excite him, and besides, the fair Florence was far more interesting.

Tom chartered an automobile and from it entered her studio. Their happy greeting over, he carried her away in triumph and indulged in a preliminary inspection of the parks and show places of the great city. Tom lay back in the tonneau, the dearest girl in all the world by his side, the purring of the huge machine and her sweet accents ringing in his ears, the glories of a radiant May day adding to his bliss. The world had surrendered at his first blow.

"Florence, dearest!" he exclaimed, his strong hand imprisoning hers, "isn't it glorious to live—and to love?"

Many a time in the days that followed he thought of that afternoon's ride with Florence, and his feelings as he reviewed the incidents—well, they were mixed feelings, in which the price paid for the

use of that automobile vulgarly insisted on intruding.

Tom presented himself at the office of Briscoe & Storey the next forenoon, and after waiting half an hour was admitted to Mr. Briscoe's private room. That gentleman looked the young miner over critically, noted his clear-cut face, the fashionable mold of his clothes, the unabashed look in his eyes, and was satisfied that his new customer was a man who was fully capable of protecting his interests, therefore he greeted him as a business equal and treated him as such.

"We received a London cable yesterday," Mr. Baldwin said, the head of the firm, searching for and finding the yellow slip, "which informs us that our representative, Mr. Hudson, will sail from Liverpool about August 1. In these interviews Tom contrived to present an appearance as natty as when he first met Mr. Briscoe, and nothing in his words or manner conveyed a hint of his desperate predicament.

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"You bet we have!" he exclaimed. "How I wish you didn't have to go. Good-bye, Little Sweetheart."

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"You bet we have!" he exclaimed. "How I wish you didn't have to go. Good-bye, Little Sweetheart."

He watched until the rear car disappeared around a curve. "It's a terrible thing to say," he muttered, "but I'm mighty glad Florence is on that train!"

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