The Fate of a Letter

By MAUD MURRAY MILLER.

"Tom, dear, will you please post this letter for me?"

"Certainly. I am going by the office any way."

"I am so glad; that will give it several hours the start of one put in the corner box."

Mrs. Jerome turned from the door with a sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness! That's disposed of. I hope she will get it promptly. Now I will arrange that room."

"Hello, Jerome! Come with me to the club. I want to talk with you about the new Radium Company."

Tolan grasped Jerome's arm as he swung around the corner, and without waiting for a reply the two men hurried along, talking earnestly of the prospects of success in getting capital to push their new scheme for the domestic use of radium. For an hour they talked with knitting brows and anxious faces. Then Jerome arose.

"I am going to New York to see about some business, and while there I will call on Manson. I am sure he will join us, and that will mean clear sailing for us."

"Yes; his money is worth much to us, but his name is worth more. When do you go?"

"In half an hour. If anything new arises, address me here."

He pulled a card from his pocket; with it came a letter. His face fell.

"By Jove! My wife asked me to post this. I'll not have the time now. Old man, attend to it for me, will you?"

"Sure."

They parted. Jerome boarded a passing car for his train, and Tolan walked in the opposite direction. His brain was busy planning ways and

"Tom, Dear, Will You Please Post This Letter for Me?"

means to form the Radium Company. The available and unavailable men were ranged around opposite sides of his brain, and each talked telepathically of the proposed plan.

Absorbed in thought, he reached the door of his office.

"Some important letters, sir," his secretary said, as he entered. "Will you attend to them now?"

"Yes. One from Harmon?"

"Yes, sir. He says he will take 100 shares of the stock at 50 cents on the dollar."

"Good. That is encouraging. And Riley?"

"He says he can not see his way just now to take any."

"Humph! Well, let him wait until it is at par."

Rapidly he went through the letters dictating answers to his stenographer. All afternoon he worked, every nerve alert, as the American usually works, and when five o'clock struck he put on his hat and left the office with a feeling of relief, taking a car home.

"Did you bring the samples?" his wife asked him, thrusting her hand into his pocket for them. Drawing out a letter, and seeing the address, she exclaimed:

"Why, Albert! What are you doing with a letter addressed to Mrs. Mary A. Landon, Trenton, N. J.?"

"Gee whiz! I forgot that letter. Jerome asked me to post it. You are going down to-morrow; be a good girl and put it in the office so it will go promptly. I am afraid to trust myself again with it."

"There must be a missing link between a man's brain and a letter to be mailed. Yes, I will take it, or poor Mrs. Jerome's letter may never see the inside of a mail bag."

When Mrs. Tobin started down town the next morning, like a dutiful wife who feels a little pity for her husband's shortcomings, the letter was reposing safely in her handbag. On the car she met a neighbor who told her of some wonderful bargains she had found the previous day at Ross & Co.'s.

"Oh, yes; they are sure-enough bargains. What do you think of real silk hose for $1.97, when that kind never sells for less than $2.00? They are beauties; I bought three pairs. And as for lisle thread ones, why, you can get them as cheap as cotton. Everything is marked way down; the floor walker said so."

"Then I must go there," answered Mrs. Tolan. "I do need so many things just now."

So to the store she went, and spent the morning in that most fascinating occupation—bargain hunting. At noon she went to a near-by restaurant for lunch, and from there to the Thursday Literary club, with several members whom she met.

All thought of the letter had passed from her mind. The absorbing club questions were of more vital interest, and not again did it occur to her until she was on the car homeward bound.

When she opened her handbag to get a car ticket, the delayed letter stared her in the face.

"Heavens!" she ejaculated under her breath; "what will Albert say?"

"I am sorry I can not go," she heard a gentleman near her say to another, "but I shall have to return to my office to-night. I have some business which I can not postpone."

An idea flashed through her brain. Turning to the speaker, she said:

"Pardon me, Mr. Clark; I heard you say you were going back down town to-night. Will you be so good as to post this letter which I had forgotten?"

"With pleasure." The outstretched letter was transferred to his pocket, and he was soon on his way to the office. Flinging aside his coat, he worked hard for three hours; then hastily donning it again, he made a rush for the last car home.

As he felt for a nickel for the conductor, his fingers closed on the fatal letter. He puzzled on the way home what to do with it, and a bright idea occurred. As he left the car, he turned to the conductor and handed him the letter with a cigar.

"You are going back to town," he said. "Will you kindly drop this in the postoffice as you pass? It is important and should leave the city to-night."

The conductor good-naturedly accepted the mission, and taking the white envelope gingerly between his dirty fingers, slipped it in a crevice of the car window, so its presence would remind him when he came to the postoffice. But a merry crowd, returning from an evening party, boarded the car for the return trip to the city, and in the bustle and good-natured confusion, the conductor forgot all about the ill-fated letter.

The letter remained in the crack above the window until the next evening, when the jolting of the car shook it into the lap of Mr. Simpson, who looked at it in wonderment. He puzzled his brain as to how he became possessed of it, and seeing it was stamped and addressed, he determined to slip it in the post-box outside the door when he came home.

Nine days later, Mrs. Jerome went to spend a social afternoon with her friend, Mrs. Simpson. The two ladies were upstairs in Mrs. Simpson's sitting room, and she was brushing and sponging her husband's coat. Giving it a vigorous shake, a letter fell out on the floor. She looked at the address.

"Dear me! Where did John get this letter?"

Mrs. Jerome looked at it.

"It is a letter I wrote mother and gave my husband to post 11 days ago. I may destroy it now, as she has arrived."

N. B.—The corner post-box is safer than any man's pocket.

Surprise Dish for Diners.

In one of Balzac's novels there is an incident in which a Parisian hostess gives delight in an elderly dinner guest by always having an extra dish, by way of a surprise, for him. Something of the same sort was provided by the hostess of a luncheon party at a Broadway hotel the other day through the agency of the head waiter and the chef.

"Canape a la Russe," the dish was called, and in spite of gastronomic traditions it was the piece de resistance of the meal. The canape was shaped like a pyramid and was composed of such a variety of things that it is not easy to remember them all. The base of the pyramid rested on a plaque covered with the grated yolks of hard-boiled eggs, bordered with the hearts of endive. The first layer round the base was composed of filets of Russian herring, set in dainty strips of red pepper rinds. The next row above consisted of medallions of caviare framed in strips of green peppers. Next was a row of slices of hard-boiled eggs surrounded by capers, this finishing the base. The shaft of the pyramid was composed of first a fine ripe tomato stuffed with celery mayonnaise; next an alligator pear, then a whole hard-boiled egg placed upright surmounted by a heart of lettuce. These were all held in place by a long silver skewer.

Output of British Potteries.

The value of the output of the British potteries is variously estimated at from $27,750,000 to $39,000,000. The potteries are located in various parts of the United Kingdom, including Staffordshire, London, Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle-on-Tyne and other small districts. The bulk of the manufactories, however, are in Staffordshire, in the west of England, where extensive beds of clay and marl have been the basis of the industry for nearly two centuries. It is estimated that 80 per cent. of the pottery manufactured in the United Kingdom is in this district.

Seek Aid of Government.

The Society of German Engineers at its annual convention held in Dresden empowered its officers to negotiate with representatives of the Prussian government of the German federation to make arrangements for the bringing out of the Technolexikon, which the society was forced to give up about a year ago, on account of the great scope of the work, involving expenditures greater than the society thought it could consistently make.

Size of the Earth.

To be exact, the diameter of the earth from pole to pole is 7,899 miles; the equatorial diameter being 7,925 miles. The slight difference of diameter is, of course, owing to the flattening out of the poles.

Rabbit Fur for Hats.

Rabbit fur is said to be supplanting wool in felt hat-making in Australia, where 32 factories are in operation. The fur is considered much superior to the finest Merino for this purpose, and millions of rabbit skins are used annually.

Modern War Munitions.

It takes three months to make a shrapnel shell. Such a projectile has the form of a cylinder, which, by the help of a time fuse, blows its head off at the instant desired, scattering 250 or more lead bullets. The smallest size used by the United States for the three-inch guns—such guns, as well as howitzers, are employed for firing shrapnel—costs $9.

World's Largest Auditorium.

It is recorded that the Coliseum at Rome had accommodations for 87,000 spectators.

THE OLD UNIFORM

By CHARLES FRASER ROSS.

The great pride in life of Jed Robinson was that his uncle Abner had been a soldier and a brave one. It was at Pea Ridge that the now old man had saved the colors of his company through an act of unusual heroism and had won distinguished notice.

Shortly after Uncle Abner came home at the cessation of hostilities, the widowed mother of Jed died. Uncle Abner was a confirmed bachelor. His brother had left nothing. Abner himself owned a little forty-acre plot of ground along the river just outside the town. He ran up a shack, made its interior as comfortable as his limited means would allow and adopted Jed.

It proved a poor possession, and with the exception of about one-twentieth of its area the land was barren as a gravel pit. It seemed as though in some original glacial convulsion nature had made a dumping ground of this convenient and selected spot to pile up all the mongrel tailings of heterogeneous mineral veins. Dig where you would, the pick or shovel was sure to strike coal, or pyrites, or asbestos in masses that suggested the ground-off product of enormous rocks that had passed over the district in remote centuries of the world's geological travail.

Uncle Abner did his full duty by Jed and kept him at school until he was eighteen. By that time the old man had become incapacitated for work. Jed gladly took up the burden of caring for the little patch of ground. The vegetable garden, a few cattle and the sale of gravel and sand to district contractors and the railroad

"I'm Welcome There."

companies brought in a steady, though meager income, barely enough to subsist on. To make matters worse, in order that Jed might have an education his uncle had mortgaged the little place. It was only by exercising the strictest economy that Jed could manage to make accounts even up.

Finally Uncle Abner took a whim into his head. Fifty miles away there was a soldiers' home. He startled Jed one day by announcing that he was going there.

"I'm welcome there, I have a right to go there," he told his sorrowful nephew. "Here's the point, lad: It's easier to feed one mouth than two. Let me have about a year or two with my old comrades, meantime reaching out for the new pension increase. You work hard, and between us we'll get the place free and clear and I'll come back."

A lonely life began for Jed. It had one bright spot. Once a week he went to the village church, once a month to the church social, and on each occasion he met Nettie Wilder. It went no further than a mutually pleasant acquaintanceship, but Jed cherished hopes of the future when better times came along.

Four times a year Uncle Abner came home for a week. These companionable visits Jed looked forward to with sincere longing pleasure. Such an occasion he was anticipating one evening, when there was a knock at the door and a bluff, hearty voice sang out:

"Open up, there—I'm nigh perished with the chilling blast!"

"Why, Frank Wilder!" greeted Jed, as he opened the door to welcome Nettie's brother.

"Yes, I'm down from the city for a week, got lonesome and thought a chat with an old friend would do me good."

Jed made his visitor fully comfortable. He piled the wood into the broad open fireplace, got out a pitcher of prime home cider and some walnuts and maple sugar.

"I say," finally observed Frank, "why don't you come down to the house once in awhile?"

"I—I've been pretty busy getting things shipshape for the winter," rather lamely explained Jed, flushing up. "Especially the last month, for uncle is coming on his regular quarterly visit, you see."

"Well, Nettie invited you to her birthday party and was quite put out because you did not come. Hello!"

Frank gave a start and a stare at something he had not noticed before—a figure standing in the dim corner of the room. Jed was grateful that the conversation had changed. He could not very well explain to his friend that grinding poverty had not admitted of his buying a decent suit of clothes for over two years, and the old ones were not presentable for a social function.

"Why, yes," he hastened to say, arising and taking up the lamp and illuminating the obscure corner of the room. "It's uncle's old uniform—stuffed."

"I declare!" remarked Frank in genuine admiration. "It looks fine. Talk about old armor—here's the real thing—something timely and natural! With that old gun and the flag spread above the uniform, one mighty fancy old Uncle Abner was about to spring out in the full glory of the battlefield."

"I thought it might please him," said Jed. "I stuffed the coat with straw and the rest of it with sand. I'm proud of Uncle Abner, I can tell you, Frank," continued Jed.

"Who wouldn't be?" replied Frank. "I hope he'll make his visit while I'm here."

"Oh, yes, he is due to arrive day after tomorrow," declared Jed.

"I'd just love to have him once more go over that splendidly thrilling story of how he saved the day at Pea Ridge. I say, Jed, I'll come Saturday evening, and I'll bring Nettie. You know your uncle always made a pet of her."

Jed fluttered like a timid school child. To see Nettie again—to have her under the same roof! How he polished up the old tinware the next day! How he planned a meal out of the ordinary for those cherished guests, and when his uncle arrived the old fellow was wild with delight to give his favorite a glad reception.

Frank Wilder was a mining engineer in the city and an agreeable and instructive talker. Both Ned and his uncle were arrayed in their best and the house spick and span when, Saturday afternoon, Nettie and her brother drove up from their home, five miles distant.

Nettie was ardent in her praises of the orderliness and system of this typical bachelor's hall. She insisted on helping Jed prepare the meal. It was the happiest moment of his life, to view her dainty figure flitting about the kitchen, keeping up a string of pretty talk, all charming nothingness, but the sweetest of music to his eager ears.

It was after supper that Uncle Abner, in fine spirits, was induced to recite the Pea Ridge incident. In his excitement he used an old saber to illustrate an onslaught on the enemy. Alas! as an accidental swoop and dip came, the steel blade swept across the knees of the sand-padded uniform. A black flood poured forth. All hands laughed at the ludicrous incident.

"Why, where did you get this stuff?" suddenly inquired Frank, who had casually picked up a handful of the sand.

"The hill is full of it," explained Jed. "Sort of iron pyrites, isn't it?"

"Pyrites!" shouted Frank, quite excited. "Why, it's tungsten, a good quality, too—used for hardening steel and worth fifty cents a unit."

"What's a unit?" propounded Uncle Abner.

"Twenty pounds."

"Why, we've got tons of it!"

"Then you're rich!" declared Frank. "I'm chemist enough to know the value of this stuff."

His opinion was correct and within a week brought results. A steel company bought the old place for a big sum and Uncle Abner did not have to go back to the Soldiers' home.

They built a new house and Frank was a welcome visitor, and Nettie, too. And finally, in the course of time Nettie came to the home to stay and help Jed do the cooking for the rest of his life.

WARNS AGAINST HIGH HEELS

Authority Points Out Danger of Fashion Which Just Now Has Strong Hold in Femininity.

An eminent authority of the medical profession has again urged upon his brother physicians the importance of impressing upon the public the need of properly caring for the feet, not only so far as having shoes constructed correctly, but also in urging every one to take a proper amount of foot gymnastics. "High heels," says the Journal of the American Medical Association in quoting Ritschl, "are particularly dangerous and lead to innumerable bodily ills."

The strength and well being of the entire body depend in a large measure on the condition of the feet, and their development in children should be watched with special care to avert injurious influences.

High heels, Doctor Ritschl declares, "affect injuriously not only the foot itself, but throw the whole weight-bearing mechanism more or less out of gear. By extending a moderately high heel backward many muscular troubles are automatically cured."

Alas, Poor Pittsburgh!

"The old man was certainly wild today," remarked the first Pirate as the last captive plunged from the plank.

"What do you mean, wild?" inquired the second.

"Didn't he walk seven men?" laughed the first offender.—Buffalo Express.

Pa's Opinion.

"Pa, what is a cannibal?"

"A savage who eats human beings, son."

"Would a cannibal eat mamma, if he could?"

"He might, son, but she would be sure to disagree with him."

Good and Bad Times to Sleep.

Sleep is soundest on cool, clear, dry evenings, when there is little moisture in the air and some mild movement of the pleasant, soothing atmosphere. On cloudy, warm, soggy or even snowy nights, other things being equal, sleep was fitful, restless and unsatisfactory.

Of the Same Opinion.

Mildred—"Don't you think Miss Elderly looks much younger in her new hat?" Helen—"Indeed I do. Why, Mildred, it makes her look but very little older than she says she is."—Judge.

Nothing New.

"These South Sea islanders are a queer lot. They have many things which are taboo, mustn't be touched." "I see nothing strange about that. It is the same principle on which we carefully plant a lot of grass for people to keep off of."

Cost.

Friend of the College President—"What did this beautiful dormitory cost you?" College President—"Three doctors' degrees. One for the man that put up the money and the others for two friends of his."—Life.

LOVE IN A FOG

By FRANK M. BICKNELL.

Judson Maxwell always gave something to the blind match seller at the corner—for luck, he said. And Barney O'Keefe, that husky, cheery beggar, always wished his honor good and plenty, and then a power more of it ator of that. Maxwell was lucky in being well born, in having his share of good looks, and in being able to spare from his prosperous business enough leisure to follow Prudence Hale across the Atlantic. But he had not yet been lucky enough to persuade her to be his wife.

In the person of Albert Pierce, Maxwell had a formidable rival. As a fair-minded man Maxwell would have freely admitted that Pierce was quite as desirable a match for Prudence as he himself was; but as the young lady had steadily refrained from showing a preference for either suitor the two were now in London for the purpose of further urging their respective suits. All efforts at a viva voce declaration having been adroitly baffled by the still noncommittal fair one, they had finally come to the following gentleman's agreement:

Each was to lay his heart, hand and fortune at Prudence's feet by letter and the two sealed proposals were to be mailed in the same box at the same time, namely, nine o'clock p. m. Monday, November 25.

Now as a matter of fact Miss Prudence was honestly in doubt as to whether she cared more for Maxwell than she did for Pierce. She rather thought—indeed, she felt reasonably sure—she would eventually find her life's happiness in becoming the wife of one of them, but which? Twice, thrice, she re-read each letter and strove heroically with her indecison—quite in vain. By and by, however, as the fog without thickened, there came to her—curiously enough—the glimmering of an idea.

The Hales had taken apartments in Sackville street. Maxwell was staying at a big new hostelry in Northumberland avenue and Pierce at a famous old one in Brook street. It thus happened that the routes the two young men would have to traverse in reaching her from their hotels were about equally long and also about equally devious. In pursuance of her idea—an idea which might or might not lead to satisfactory results—she called up Maxwell on the telephone.

"I have your letter, Jud," she told him, "yours and Bert's. Listen carefully. You will please leave your hotel this afternoon at three o'clock precisely, and start for this house on foot. Walk the entire distance. I shall telephone similar instructions to Bert. You are to find your way to me through the fog, and the one who arrives first—well, I won't promise anything now, but leave that for this afternoon—if you don't both get lost in the fog."

The fog had thickened to a "pea-soup" consistency, and vehicular traffic was practically at a standstill when at 3:27 p. m., the Hale's parlor maid brought Prudence a card, and announced:

"A gentleman to see you, miss."

Prudence drew a long breath and her heart began to beat with rather more than normal rapidity as she took the card and glanced at its inscription. Was she glad or sorry to read the name of Judson Maxwell? Strange though it may seem, she was not yet sure of herself. She was conscious, however, of wondering that he had been able to get to her so soon, through a fog of almost midnight darkness, and also of dimly fancying that his greater love had served him as a guide.

"Prudence!" He appeared at the door evidently in a fever of suspense, then, seeing her alone, he came forward eagerly and took her hands in his. "Prudence," he repeated, "I am first?"

"Yes," she replied, "you are first;" and now her unruly heart certainly was thumping at a scandalous rate. Out of the dark fog light seemed suddenly to have broken.

"Are you—aren't you—glad?" he asked breathlessly.

"I—I—think—perhaps—I—am," she answered rather haltingly.

"Aren't you sure?" he demanded reproachfully.

Gently she withdrew her hands from his clasp, and raising them, put them about his neck, then shyly drew his face down toward her own, now crimsoning with a color that appeared to him of divine loveliness. She didn't say she was sure, but—she didn't need to.

Pierce came about two hours later—he had gone badly astray in the fog—but he arrived in time to offer his congratulations, and to add, handsomely, that as the best man had won the bride he hoped to be "best man" at the wedding.

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"Well, Barney, you brought me the finest kind of luck; you were a friend in need that time if ever there was one."

"Sure, yer honor, 'tis proud an' glad I am I could help ye, though 'twas nothing at all I done worth mention. With me goin' over the route an' right past the young leddy's house twice a day, gettin' here an' back ag'in to me own home, 'twas as easy as winkin'."

Yes, Maxwell always gave something to the blind match-seller for luck and long had Barney reason to remember the most profitable match he had ever had anything to do with negotiating.

His Ears All Right.

Johnny is a little southern boy living in Texas with his grandmother, who is a little deaf. One day while he was playing she called to him several times, but he didn't answer. Finally she said: "Johnny, don't you hear me?" and Johnny says, "'Cose I heah you; my ears ain't lame."

No Use to Him.

The prisoner threw the magazines across his cell in disgust, and cursed eloquently. "Nothin' but continued stories," he growled, "an' I'm to be hung next Tuesday."—Chicago Herald.