

The College Love Letter Club.

I once heard a man tell this story who was part of it. And he was ashamed of it. So am I. The Jones College Love Letter Club is a matter of history—profane—history. I say "Jones." Of course that is not the right name, but it will not do to be more exact.

Lutkins told me about it one night, in the moonlighted shade of the two chapel gate pines, with his legs dangling over the fence. He took his pipe from his mouth when he became excited at intervals during the narration, and the stray beams that glanced from the slate roof of Murray struck the silver chasing on the chocolate bowl, and sent out little daggers of sparkle when he waved it about.

"Now, if it hadn't been examination time and too hot to go out to play tennis, it would in all probability never have happened. It was both, however," he said. And here is Lutkins story as nearly as I can recall it.

There were four of them up in West, where the halls are wide—wide enough to play fairly decent singles if you aren't fastidious about the edges of your racquet—and if there is any breeze you get it there. The four were scattered around the room trying to keep cool.

"Bowler has been writing to a girl," said Lowney, who was lying on the bed, languidly fishing for a pillow that had slipped to the floor. Lowney roomed with Bowler, a freshman, because he had come in late that year and couldn't help it. "I used to wonder why he spent his Sunday afternoons writing home. We get our mail in the same box, and a cream colored missive comes for him every Tuesday and Saturday."

The other three laughed. So did a junior who had come into the room, and was sitting on the shoe box. Bowler was a dig, and wore trousers that were an inch or two too short for him. Then he ran to abbreviated cutaway coats that had practically no tail, and were shiny. He was generally otherwise uninteresting. He was good-natured, however, and not entirely ugly.

"What a guy he is," remarked "Pop" Baker from the big study chair. "And say, men, if he'd only dress decently he wouldn't be half so bad looking. I had a girl in the Gym gallery the other day when the freshmen were doing their little Indian club drill, and she picked out Bowler at once, and wanted to know who he was. Said he was the handsomest fellow on the floor. And, by George, he did look good and big. I changed the subject, but I'll bet anything that when she comes up to the Prom she'll ask me to introduce him. Think of Bowler at the Prom in that cutaway he wears to chapel."

"And imagine Bowler in love," said some one else. "I'd like like blazes to read one of his girl's letters."

Lowney sat up right on the bed. "That's not a bad idea," he said. We can have some fun with the old fellow. But half the sport would be in hearing him read a letter himself and then tell us all about it, while we sympathized. He takes everything in such dead earnest."

"You're talking like a fool, Dick," drawled the junior. "I knew a freshman once who used to read all his mother's letters to his chum, who was tough and got drunk. He thought they would do him good, sort of missionary work, you know. And what's more, they did. One night the tough man broke down and cried like a baby all over his pillow. Then he got up and fired his whiskey flask through the window. I saw the flask in another fellow's room afterward, and recognized it by the initials cut on the neck. The funny part of it was that the tough man's girl had given him the flask. I knew her, too. She told me a year or two afterward that she had given back the tough man's ring because he had got to be too slow for her. I looked at her real hard, and said I thought he had. But you can't get even Bowler to try missionaryizing with his best girl's letters."

"Wrong again, my dear," smiled Lowney. "Now, this is my scheme. I'm going to organize the Jones College Love Letter Club. I shall ask Bowler to join, and tell him that a few of the most congenial of us have regular meetings, at which each fellow reads the last letter from his fiancée to the rest. Then they talk it over with him, and suggest the best way of conducting the engagement in the future. We'll meet here next week some time, and we'll each have a letter to read. We'll put Bowler last to keep him from getting suspicious. But, for heaven's sake, don't overdo the thing."

So the Jones College Love Letter Club was organized. Lowney saw Bowler the next day. Now, Bowler was no fool. On the contrary, the professors of the faculty would have told you he was one of the brainiest men in college. But he was honest and engaged. When a man is honest and engaged all at the same time he is mellow for deception. Then the night of the first stated meeting of the Jones College Love Letter Club arrived, and with it Bowler, who was first upon the ground. When Lowney and

the rest came in they saw him start up from steamer chair, and cram an envelope into his pocket. There was an odor of scent—very cheap scent—in the room. Girls, especially country girls, will not learn how to use sachet powder in their correspondence.

"That's all right, Bowler," said Lowney. "Don't be embarrassed. We're all here for that, you know, brothers in the bonds of Dan Cupid," and he laid a daintily addressed bit of correspondence on the table where the lamplight showed "Mr. Richard Lowney, 41 West College," traced in a distinctly feminine hand, to good advantage. The rest of the club added their letters, Bowler timidly placing his on the top, and then they got down to business.

"Daisy Hiseox did mine for me, and it's a corker," said the junior to Lowney, in a stage whisper, before the latter thumped with a tennis racquet upon the table, and said: "Gentlemen, according to our custom the one of us who happens to be president for the evening will read his letter first, the rest of us drawing for place. I have the pleasure of introducing to the club our new brother, Bowler, who has been admitted to our circle by reason of having become engaged to Miss Mary Brant of Ponkwasset, Me., one year ago last May, and being in the receipt of at least two letters weekly from that source, each being of or above the limit prescribed by the club for membership, ten pages." President Lowney sat down while the club precipitated itself upon Bowler and tendered him its congratulations.

Then Lowney read his letter. He was quite proud of it. "Darling Dick," he began. His mouth twitched at the start, but after he had read a few lines he became interested, and handled the rest effectively—possibly unintentionally so—but I happened to know that Lowney was afterwards elected to the Footlights on the strength of that letter. Here was the letter, or the parts of the letter, that Lutkins remembered:

"You don't know how happy your last letter made me. No, dear, no one knows of our engagement as yet. Sometimes when I think it over all alone in my room at night, with your photograph in my hand—you look so manly and noble, dear, in that picture—I am frightened to say that we are engaged, really belong to one another. Dick, I shall remember that last night at the Sloanes' as long as I live. You had danced only once with me that night. And after that dance we sat together under that little bower on the veranda. I remember how funny and ghostlike your tie looked in the dark, and there were little bits of moonlight that crept through the Virginia creeper and sparkled on your fraternity pin. We could hear them finishing our waltz in the ballroom, 'Auf Wiedersehen' will always be sacred to me because of that night."

Lowney stopped a moment to clear his throat. Bowler leaned over towards him and took one hand in both of his and grasped it tightly. And Lowney grew angry when he heard the junior cough a little from the window seat. He knew that the cough had begun as a laugh; so he drew his hand away roughly and went on, but found it hard work. "And then, Dick, you said—you loved me. I could not have spoken. I was afraid if I did I might find it was all a happy dream instead of the blessed truth. O Dick, if you had left me that night without speaking I should have died."

There was a lot more of the letter, Lutkins said, but he had forgotten it. Lowney must have written better than he knew. When he finished no one said anything, and all the funny congratulations that were to have followed his effort were lacking. One man finally broke the silence by scratching a match to light his pipe, and everybody grasped eagerly at the suggestion, and filled his briar, for something to do.

The letters that followed Lowney's did not stick closely to the original manuscript. The junior skipped whole parts that he and Miss Daisy Hiseox of the town had decided between them the day before were especially fine. "Somehow, I didn't feel like reading it," said the junior afterwards.

Bowler came last, and when he began Lowney would have stopped him, only he didn't know how. The awkward grind read the words in a soft voice, "just like a woman as someone said after it was all over. His honest face lost its timid look. He forgot everything except himself and the girl who had written the letter he held in his hand.

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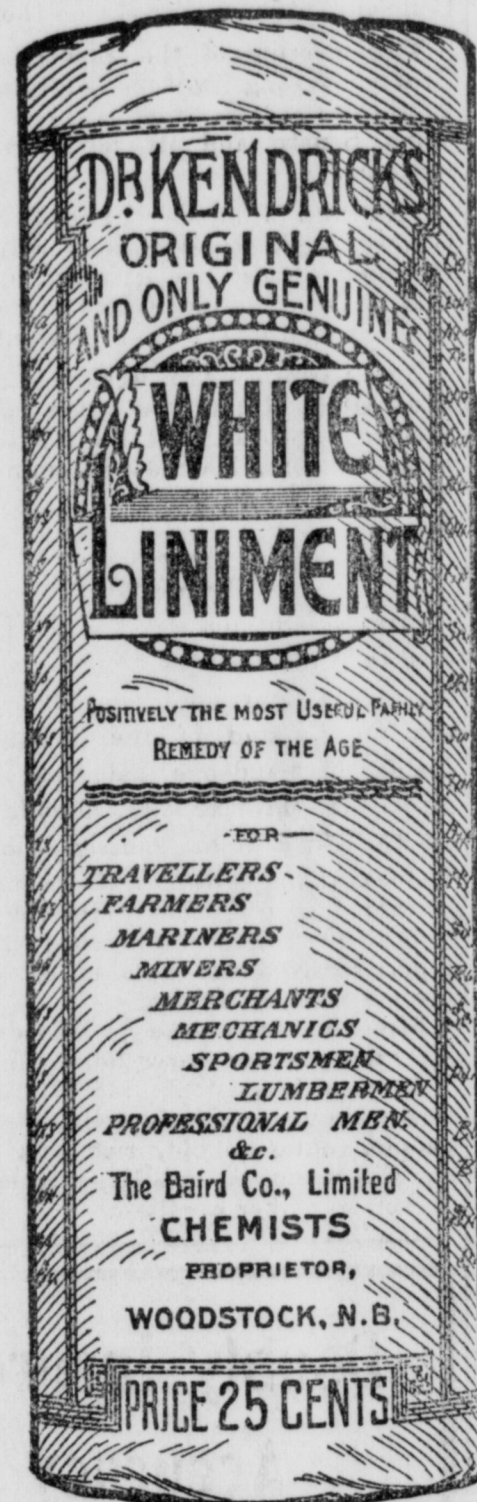
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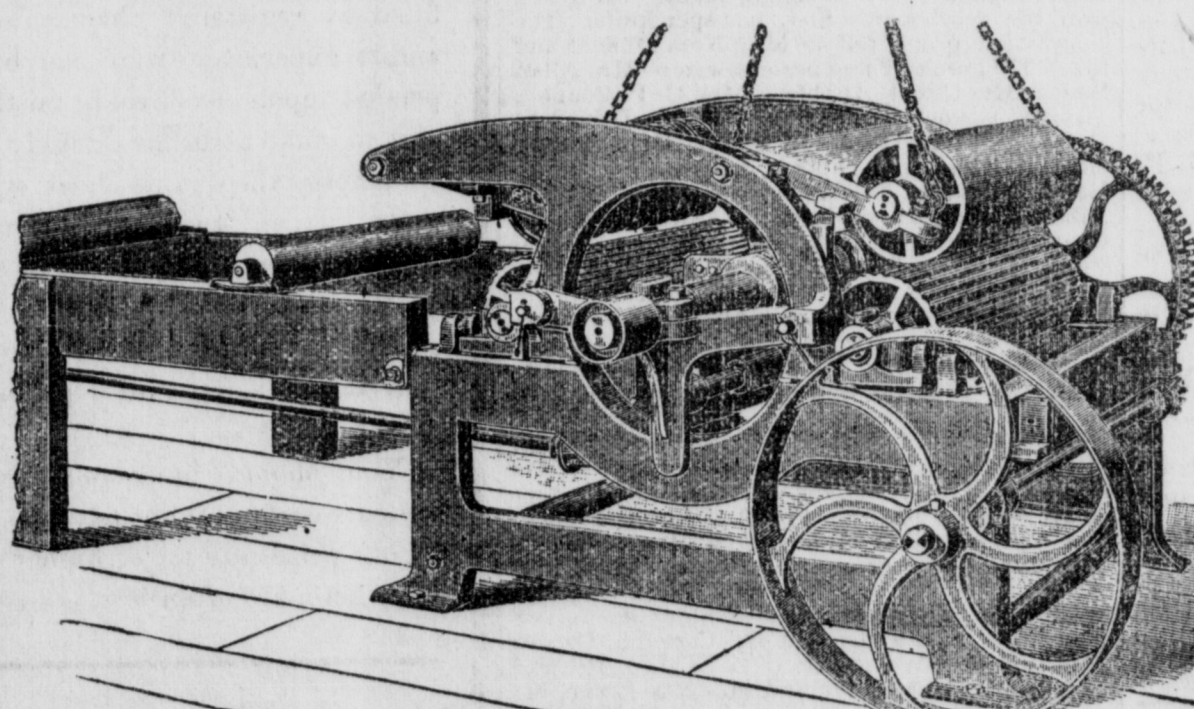
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The room was as still as death with Lowney moving back and forward in his chair.

"Mother and I read your letter together. Robert, and were glad that you were well and happy. I can scarcely believe that it is four months since we saw each other. The time has seemed so short with your letters every week and thinking about you. Sometimes I am afraid that I won't be fit to be your wife after you are educated. I know so little; but I can't give you up, and I do know how to keep house. Mother says so. God has been very good to me, dear, and I shall try not to be too happy."

It was the junior who pleaded just then. "O Bowler, don't read any more of that." Lowney's upsetting of the lamp—the junior's outbreak had to be covered—and the consequent darkness afforded a pretext for the Jones College Love Letter Club adjourning in something like good order. When the only real member had gone over to his room in East after some astonishingly warm handshakes—astonishing because he was a freshman and a grind—there was a silence.

Then said Lowney: "I've been a damned low brute this night, and I hope to be forgiven for it." He took a pink envelope from the table and threw the pieces into the waste basket. "For Bowler's sake I shan't ask him. But the man that thinks this funny enough to tell as a joke is more of a cur than he thinks he is now."

"Amen," said the junior. Then he got up and went outside, closing the door after him.

So the first meeting of the Jones College Love Letter Club was the last, which proves that there is, after all, some hope for college men. J. R. R.

The Chartist Movement.

A gigantic petition was prepared to be carried to Westminster by a body of 500,000 men. The Government became aware of the movement, however, and prepared to meet any force that might be offered, the Duke of Wellington being put in command of the defence. When the day came only about 2500 persons gathered on Kennington Common and these, completely disunited in plans were overawed by the Government's preparations and allowed their petition to be conveyed through back streets in three cabs to the House of Commons. It had been claimed that the petition bore 5,000,000 signature but it was found upon examination to contain not over 2,000,000, and many of these were forged. The flat failure of this demonstration for all practical purposes ended the Chartist movement. As one writer has said, "when brought to the test Chartism proved to be a mere windbag, blown to portentous dimensions by demagogues and would be politicians." The agitation had its value, for, if nothing else, it forced the upper classes of society to study the conditions of the lower as they had never done before. As for the demands themselves, which the Chartists made, they were not immoderate, and at one time or another have nearly all been acceded to. And through annual Parliaments vote by ballot, the equalizing of electoral districts, and the lowering of the property qualification for members of the House of Commons have all come about in other ways than as direct results of the Chartist movement, still it would be unfair to say that that movement did not considerably hasten the time of their realization.—Chautauquan.

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