

## A very Remarkable Despatch.

It was a grilling day in the July of 1876, as I sauntered into the office of the Western Union Telegraph Company, on Broadway, for the purpose of sending a despatch to my friend, George Meyers, the artist, who had just returned from his trip to West Point, where he had pitched his tent for the purpose of doing a picture or two of the scenes enacted in the glorious war of Independence.

I am a lawyer and in '76 was a "rising junior." I had been fagging cruelly, sparing myself no amount of labor, and when on that July day my longed-for vacation was at hand, I felt like a school-boy about to get away for the real and genuine holidays.

As I approached the grating and awaited my turn to pop in the message, I became interested in a young lady richly but plainly attired, whose *señe* figure was simply perfection and whose golden hair was wound round the back of her graceful head in massive and luxurious plaits. Of course any man of a certain age obeys the impulse which bids him gaze on a fair or a faultless form—it is but nature's tribute to the beautiful—and in mere obedience to the mysterious law I strained eagerly forward to get a glimpse of her features, but without success.

"When will this message be forwarded," she asked in a low and musical voice.

The clerk muttered something I could not hear.

"Oh, I hope it will go at once. How much am I to pay?"

The phlegmatic employe proceeded to count the words and announced that the message would cost two dollars.

The young lady put her hand to her pocket, started, colored violently, became deadly pale and palpitant:

"I have left my purse at home. What am I to do?"

The clerk only bit his pencil and said nothing.

"I live out of town and the message would be too late," and in her perplexity she turned and faced me.

She was very charming. Lustrous violet eyes and long sweeping lashes—eyes sad yet joyous, bright yet tender. A delicately formed nose, slightly *retroverse*, which imparted a piquancy to the face such as one only sees in Greuz's ravishing portraits. Lucious lips and pearly teeth. Her golden hair came down upon her forehead, and she wore a hat surmounted by a rich dark-blue feather that almost swung across her shoulders.

My voice was scarcely audible as I said:

"I beg your pardon. I inadvertently heard you conversation with the clerk. Will you permit me to relieve you from any embarrassment by allowing me to pay for the despatch?"

She started as I spoke and, bestowing upon me a haughty glance that almost amounted to defiance, exclaimed:

"We are strangers, sir, and I cannot accept your offer however courteously meant," and she turned from me.

I felt nettled and strangely irritated. A keen sense of injury smote me. I resolved to act. Plunging my hand into my pocket I seized upon two silver dollars and flung them to the clerk gruffly, crying, "Send that lady's message," and striding from the building, sprang into a passing stage.

"What an ass," I muttered, and we rumbled along up Broadway. "What a blooming idiot to indulge in two dollars' worth of chivalry." And then her definite loveliness came back to me, and I felt elated, triumphant.

She might be Lady Clara Vere de Vere for aught I knew to the contrary; but she gentle or simple, she was in my debt and she owed me two mighty dollars.

George Meyers met me at the dock at West Point.

"You never beheld such a charming ranch as I have dropped on!" he exclaimed, as we strolled up the hill.

"It's all honeysuckle and sunshine, and birds whistling and a rustic porch over every window, and a summer house instead of a stoop, and a landscape in every corner, and such like," and he kissed the tips of his fingers as he waved them in the direction of our temporary homestead.

Our ranch was all that George had painted it, commanding a view of the lordly Hudson, with its glorious and varied scenery. As we sat on the stoop lazily smoking our cigars, I related my adventure with the "Fair One with the Golden Locks."

"Why, I used to think you a hard headed, shrewd, solid business man," laughed George; "but now I shall never see a two dollar bill that I will not think of my friend Tom Kendrick, loafing around telegraph offices for the purpose of paying for the despatches of damsels who have forgotten their purses."

Our life at West Point was an enchanting monotony—a plunge in the river at seven, breakfast at nine, no letters to read or write—thank heaven—a prolonged snooze. George sketched, I read a trashy novel with the full knowledge that it was rubbish of the most uncomprehending description, but exulted in its flimsy fiction nevertheless; and to the dock to meet the steamer—this act, together with attending evening parade at the Point, we regarded in common with all the guests at Cozzini's Hotel, and indeed of the village, in the light of a serious duty; and as the weather fair or foul, wet or dry, stormy or calm, we went like a pair of detectives, awaiting the landing of some party telegraphed as "wanted."

Six weeks had glided away as though I had been in dreamland and the hour was not far distant which was to summon me to work. The shadow of New York was upon me.

An exquisite afternoon found us, as usual, on the lookout for the boat en route to Albany. Tourists from all climes under the sun were passing backward and forward and George's excuse for gazing at the pretty girls was on the plea of "studying character."

I never saw such a colorless lot," said my companion as the boat commenced to glide away from the dock. "As ugly as—ah, that's something over there in dead mourning—the girl with the hay-colored hair."

My heart leaped.

It was the young lady whom I had

encountered at the telegraph office.

My eyes caught her's and she slightly flushed.

The boat was moving swiftly along the dock.

She spoke rapidly to her companion, a tall aristocratic young man, towards whom at that single instant, I conceived a deadly aversion. This man instantly quitted her side and rushing to the stern of the boat shouted:

"Your name and address; I want to get out of your debt"—his tone as though he was addressing a lackey.

"You are not in my debt," I defiantly retorted.

The boat had almost passed from the dock.

He sprang upon a seat and rapidly wrapped a silver dollar in a greenback. "I know not of what value," cried he, as he flung it:

"Catch! Your debt with interest, and thanks."

The boat had passed away from the dock. I was not the "boss" baseball player in the Manhattan club without being able to make a fair catch. I caught his missile as it came flying through the air. With all my strength I sent it spinning back to him. It struck him and a savage thrill of pleasure ran through me as I saw him apply his handkerchief to his face.

The steambot had passed away and my heart's longings were with that fair girl who was being borne from me, whither I could not tell.

What was this haughty beauty to me? What link between us? None, save an act for which a newly-breeched school-boy would flout me. Her husband, too. Strange to say, I never admitted the possibility of her being united to that man—whenever the thought came to the surface I didn't get it breathing time, but sent it down to the unfathomable depths of undefined idea.

"A letter for you, sir," exclaimed our landlady, the morning but one after my *rencontre*, handing me a square envelope mouling over with a monogram in scarlet and gold. The superscription was in an unknown female hand. I hesitated before opening it. It must be from her. I studied the monogram, but it was as undecipherable as the hieroglyphics on the nightgown of the last of the Ptolemies. At last I tore open the envelope. The letter ran thus:

"Miss Jones begs to thank Mr. Kendrick—it was from her—for his great kindness in saving her from drowning in the Hudson on last Thursday and—"

Upon my arrival in New York I found a letter which compelled me to take the night train to Boston. I ordered my berth to be made up without entering the sleeping compartment, and smoked a cigar before turning in.

It was bright daylight and we were slowing into the depot when the porter woke me up. I rolled out of my berth, and stood gathering my impedimenta together preparatory to going in for a wash, when a conductor exclaimed:

"Please to let those ladies pass sir."

My fellow-travellers were standing, anxious, like Mr. Stern's Starling, to get out. I muttered an apology for blocking the way, and turning, cast a short glance at two ladies.

One of them was the young girl I had encountered at the telegraph office.

My holidays had passed away, and work grim, gamut, earnest was upon me. Letters to be replied to, papers to be hunted up, appointments to be made and kept, opinions to be consulted, law books to be consulted, opinions to be given, and every pigeon hole in my walking existence crammed to the utmost limit of its endurance. Bitterly I reviled the ill-fortune that closed my lids in the cars; bitterly the ill-luck that forced me into a corner beneath the bony knuckles of time; bitterly the mocking destiny that dashed the cup from my lips when thrice the brimming nectar was within reach of them. My work stood between me and her image, thrusting it aside with an iron and unswerving hand.

It was a murky, drizzling morning in December, upon the eve of Christmas holidays. I had not the pleasing gratification of even seeing my bed upon the preceding night, as I was compelled to read up a case involving a series of the most important issues, and my night's rest went down before the interests of my clients.

It was a disputed case, and I had been retained for the defendants.

Miss Isabella Van Zandt died in the preceding August, bequeathing the bulk of her vast property to her nephew and niece, the children of a deceased sister, and a comparatively small residue to a sole surviving brother, who now disputed the will on the ground of undue influence and the mental incapacity of the testatrix. On our side it was alleged that the testatrix was of sound mind at the time of her demise, and that the bequests were the result of natural affection, and that she was further influenced by the fact that the plaintiff was extremely wealthy and unmarried.

There were two weak points in our army. The first, that Miss Van Zandt had been estranged from her nephew up to within a few days of her death; the second, that Miss Lindsay was generally considered somewhat eccentric. Her nephew, Mr. Edward Appleton, had married "a penniless lass wi' a long pedigree" contrary to the expressed wishes of his aunt; and it was solely owing to the influence of his sister Mabel that he was, at the eleventh hour, restored to the good graces of his offended relative.

It was late when I arrived at court, and in addition to my brief, I was encumbered with a ghastly headache, which at every throbbing led me to imagine that my skull was in imminent danger of exploding as though through the agency of nitro-glycerine.

The plaintiff had a cloud of witnesses in attendance, and the case, from the magnitude of the property at stake, excited considerable interest.

The plaintiff's case was ably, eloquently and argumentatively stated by his counsel, and about twenty persons who had been on terms of intimacy with the deceased were examined as to her eccentricities, and also with regard to her decaying powers, antecedent to her demise.

My "leader" cross-examined such of those witnesses as he deemed shaky, and by dint of a series of artful and

elaborate queries, totally irrelevant to the question at issue, succeeded in driving a number of these witnesses into a state of mental irritation bordering on frenzy, and the remainder into a condition of hopeless and irrevocable bewilderment.

When he had duly impressed the jury with the conviction that the individuals who had appeared before them were each and all possessed of a natural taste for perjury, he proceeded to state the case for the defence, and in a brief but incisive statement painted the conduct of the plaintiff in such hideous colors as to justify the refusal of the tears of a solitary angel to wipe the record out.

If our case was indented with weak points it likewise bristled with strong ones, and one upon which we placed an unlimited confidence was the fact of the deceased lady's having telegraphed to her nephew, a few days prior to her death, to come and receive her unequalled forgiveness. The substance of the despatch was written by herself, copied by her niece, and transmitted by the latter to Mr. Edward Appleton, who acted upon its *instant*.

The existence of the despatch was questioned. By a piece of extraordinary good luck the original, in the handwriting of Miss Van Zandt, had been preserved, and with cool, self-satisfied demeanor, my "leader" rose and said:

"We propose to place Miss Appleton on the stand now," and turning to me, half-whispered, "You take her up, Kendrick; I'll hold myself in reserve."

Up to this particular moment I had preserved a masterly inactivity. My head was splitting, and my ideas were deranged by the tortures of physical anguish. I would have given a hundred dollars for respite, but the chance was too good to throw away; I could not afford to lose the opportunity, so by a vigorous effort, I drew myself together and glancing rapidly at the marginal note scrawled on my brief, I turned toward the stand, and blinded with pain, drawled:

"I am Miss Mabel Appleton."

"You are acquainted with the handwriting of this document?"

"I do."

"You recollect Tuesday, the 27th of July last?"

"Perfectly."

"You are acquainted with the handwriting of this document?"

"Intimately."

"You recollect sending a despatch to your brother at Montreal?"

"I do."

"At the request of your aunt?"

"Yes; she wrote the substance of the despatch."

"Will you have the goodness to inform me if you have seen this document before?" handing a half sheet of note paper all written over.

She raised her veil.

The court swung around me; Mabel Appleton held the original draft of the despatch for which I had paid two dollars.

"That 'bit o' writin' is now framed and glazed, and suspended in a gold frame in my wife's boudoir, and many a time do we refer to that memorable 27th of July, when I paid two dollars for a despatch that was destined to do so much for her, and so much for me."

The Ocean Steamer of the Future.

[New York Herald.]

The fierce competition of the transatlantic steamship lines to secure the patronage of first class passengers is working out good results. The "City of Rome," now building for the Italian line, and the "Servia," for the Cunard, promise to be magnificent vessels, of unexampled speed. But the London Engineer states it has reason to believe the Guion line is about to build a new ship which, though smaller than the two it is designed to rival, will have fifty furnaces, against forty-eight of the new Cunard. The Engineer also says that the Guion vessel are in suitable proportions, as we doubt not they will be, she will realize a greater speed than any vessel engaged in the Atlantic service does at present, or than the vessels now building can be expected to reach.

But, great as these efforts to attain high speed with all the desiderata of nautical architecture are, a grander effort in the same direction has been set on foot. A novel steamship has recently been patented by Mr. Robert Wilson, of Melbourne, Victoria, designed to make the voyage from England to the Antipodes in twenty-five days, about one-third less time than the shortest run by steam on record. It is a model of a double hull, each part of which is divided into two cigar-shaped portions. According to the London Marine Engineer, it has the advantages of moderate surface friction, of allowing waves striking the ship ahead to pass under it, and is constructed on the principles laid down by Professor Froude, the greatest modern authority on the laws of liquid resistance and buoyancy. The method of propulsion is eminently adapted, this journal says, to "give an exceptionally effective grip to the water."

The propelling gear consists of two large drums fore and aft driven by the engines and passing over the drums a continuous band of iron links on which at suitable intervals are fixed the paddles or blades, which are entirely protected against violent seas, so that their depth of immersion is unaffected by the ship's rolling or pitching, and there is no danger of "racing."

If, as the Marine Engineer asserts, the wave of replacement has been found to collect between the hulls, moving with the vessel, so that the propelling blades have all the advantage of driving through water that is advancing rather than retreating, it seems certain that such a steamship can be driven at enormous speed. Its great breadth of beam, affording corresponding stability, would admit of placing its engines and boilers above the water line so that in case of collision or of a leak or of swamping seas, the fires would not be at once extinguished, and the ship though in a sinking condition would be manageable to the last moment. If these elements of great speed and safety can be realized and the novel craft combining them proves herself capable of breasting the big waves of the Cape of Good Hope and the furious gales that sweep her Australian track, there is reason to expect she will make a revolution in marine architecture.

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