

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 11 1896.

A FREAK OF RED TAPE.

THE ROUTE OF AN UNSTAMPED, UNPAID LETTER.

Astra Gets One and Describes the Impression It Made Upon Her—Three Cent Stamps Galore—What Would be a Simple Method in Her Opinion.

We are most of us given to speaking with a lofty contempt, or a sort of tolerant amusement, of what Charles Dickens called "the red-tapeism of England" and referring, with the youthful arrogance of people who have grown up with a young country, to its sad effect upon trade, and progress. I don't imagine we ever thought of applying to ourselves the adage about people who lived in glass houses being cautious about throwing stones, because I am sure we thought that nothing less than stone walls sheltered us. I know I thought so, until I came face to face with an instance of "red tape" in our own broad Dominion, which would not have disgraced the brother country herself, and the High Court of Chancery at that!

A short time ago, I was away from home for a week or two, and on my return I found awaiting me an official slip from the Post office department at Ottawa! Frightened? Well I should think so! I was nearly scared out of my wits, but when I took time to collect my thoughts, I ran rapidly over the evil deeds I could remember, and finding my conscience clear of enclosing a letter in a parcel or a newspaper, writing on the back of a birthday card, using cancelled stamps, committing any other breach of postal discipline which could place me in the grasp of the law; I took courage and opened it. Within was simply a message from the postal authorities informing me that a letter had been posted at St. John, New Brunswick, to my address, and was now detained at Ottawa, on account of insufficient postage. If I would enclose the requisite amount—a three cent stamp, the letter would be forwarded to my address, otherwise it would be consigned to the Dead Letter Office.

I did not know of anyone in St. John who would write to me without paying the postage, and yet whose letter would be worth the trouble of writing all the way to Ottawa for; so I made up my mind that one of my girls had merely been putting in an early application for a freckle wash or skin tonic, and that she would write again. Feminine curiosity asserted itself, however, and I found my days haunted, and my nights disturbed by a persistent yearning to know the contents of that letter, and at last it conquered me, and I wrote. In due time I received large, important looking whitey brown envelope officially franked, and bearing in large letters on the upper right hand corner, the legend—"On Her Majesty's Service. William White, Deputy P. M. Gen'l" and on the lower left hand corner "Post Office Department Canada, Dead Letter Branch." Between these, my own address took up the remaining space. When I had finished reading the outside I opened the envelope, and it had been impressed with the decorations of the outer covering, my admiration of the enclosure was boundless! To begin with I pried off the stamps, which were very lightly affixed and in the place where it should have been where the letter was first posted, was the pencilled word, "stamp" evidently written by the confiding soul who had originally sent the letter, and over this modest request was stamped in large, and very black letters, the stern response—"Cannot Be Forwarded Unpaid." Directly across the top of the envelope, the humiliating announcement was again printed—"Returned For Insufficient Postage," and an immense figure 3, indicating the deficiency, finished the sentence, while the figures 2138 decorated the left hand end of the envelope. Inside was a note from Progress office, containing instructions and information, connected with some M. S., I had sent to the office, and the cause of all this turmoil lay in the very simple fact that the office boy had failed to notice that the letter was unstamped when he took the mail to the post office!

Now I would not have either the post master general, the Deputy P. M. Gen'l, or any of the clerks in the post office department of Canada think that I am ungrateful for all the trouble they took on my account; because I am not, I am deeply sensible of their efforts in my behalf, only, I cannot help wondering if the affair could not have been managed more easily. Suppose for instance that the letter had not been diverted from its original course at all, but merely allowed to reach the town to which it was addressed; would it not have been a simple plan to mark "postal charges 6 cents," and make me pay them before the letter was delivered to me? It would have cost me just the same, and saved a lot of time! Suppose that letter had contained advice from my agents to sell out a certain amount of stock before an anticipated fall in the market, and that the delay had meant the loss of thousands of dollars to me, would I not have had substantial grounds for

an action for damages against the post office department? Yea verily, I think any lawyer who was unaware of my financial standing would have encouraged me to take the matter into court at once.

I know that outsiders cannot be expected to understand the inner workings of official policy; it is well to be deliberate, and circumspection may be an excellent thing in its way but when one considers that my letter first went hundreds of miles out of its way, in spite of the fact that the sender's willingness to pay for it was indicated by a written direction to stamp it, and the recipient could have been made to pay the charges; that a notification had first to be written to me, my response, and stamp received, and then that stamp carefully affixed to the letter, and then cancelled, and the letter finally enclosed in an official envelope, and readdressed to me, instead of being forwarded, all this formality involving fully a week's delay—I think I am fully justified in saying that it seems like putting a great deal of mustard on a very little meat, or in other words, exalting the smallest of molehills into the largest of mountains, to very little purpose.—ASTRA.

AN INCIDENT AT THE FRONT.

The Captain Was Permitted to Die Like a Soldier.

One night when the sentinels had been warned to be unusually alert, as the enemy were in force only a mile away, the soldier on post No. 4, which was directly in front of a small clearing in the forest, suddenly called out for the corporal of the guard. The order was to avoid firing if possible, as the men behind the breastworks were worn out with marching. There was a full moon and she threw such a light down into the clearing that the smallest object could be distinguished by the sentinel. As he looked and listened a confederate in the uniform of a captain stepped into the clearing in full view. The sentinel lifted his musket and opened his lips to cry out, believing that the enemy was moving down on our lines, but something in the demeanor of the lone figure made him pause. After a moment he simply called for the corporal of the guard.

It was a strange sight we saw—three or four of us—as we stood on post No. 4. The confederate came walking slowly down upon us, an open letter in his left hand—his right carelessly swinging. We knew him for a sleep-walker the instant we got eyes on him. His movements seemed to be made by machinery, and the carriage of head and shoulders was not that of a man awake. He came straight down upon us, head erect and eyes wide open, but looking neither to the right nor to the left. We stood aside to let him pass, and his left hand touched a bush and the latter was torn from his fingers and picked up by the corporal. It was a wife's letter to her husband—a wife's letter to her soldier-captain in the field. The man before us belonged to the Tenth Alabama, and the letter was written from an Alabama plantation.

"Don't touch him," whispered the corporal, as we fell in behind the somnambulist. He walked down our left-front the width of two regiments and back again. One of our party went ahead to whisper to the sentinels, and they stood in awe as the midnight visitor passed down and returned. His gaze was always the same—straight before him, and he neither increased nor slackened his pace. By and by he came back to post No. 4, and there he stopped for five minutes and seemed to be thinking. We stood close to him, but no man made a sound. We noted the color of hair and eyes—the fresh scar on his cheek—a finger missing from his left hand. Of a sudden the man started up and walked on, heading straight for the confederate lines. We stood and watched across the glade and into the darkness of the woods and then turned away.

"I feel that God will bring you home to me again," said the letter which the bush had torn from his hand. At 9 o'clock next morning we were fiercely attacked, but after a bloody conflict the enemy were driven back. When we went out to succor the wounded and bury the dead we found the captain almost among the first of the dead. Three bullets had struck him in the breast as he dashed forward at the head of his company. In his breast pocket we placed the letter which a loving hand had traced, and we gave him a grave of his own and marked it that his friends might know the spot when war was no more. Better for the loving wife had we made him prisoner as he came walking among us that night, but had we done so he might not have died a soldier's death.

A Brilliant Remark.

Count Jaubert had attacked Marshal Soult with a number of epigrams, and when the two met at a reception of the court of Louis Philippe, the marshal turned his back just as the count was coming forward to speak to him, and this in the presence of thirty people. "Monsieur le Marechal," said Jaubert, quietly, "I have been told that you consider me your enemies. I see with pleasure that it is not so." "Why not, sir?" demanded Soult. "Because," said Jaubert, you are not in the habit of turning your back to the enemy." The marshal held out his hand, and the count's success was complete.—San Francisco Wave.

INVESTING IN A HOUSE.

ALADY WHO BOUGHT A PROPERTY AT A LOW FIGURE.

She Attended an Auction in Halifax and Had No Trouble in Securing the Purchase—Her Husband Took Another View of the Matter—Two Kinds of Title.

HALIFAX, April 9.—They are telling a good story this week regarding an ex-mayor of this ancient city of Halifax, and the proposed purchase of the Kennel home-stand. For generations the Kennel mansion on Pleasant street has been a landmark in this city. There Sir Edward Kennel lived and for many a long year the house was the centre of happy family life and social hospitality. It was a society centre, and any one who was fortunate enough to obtain the entrée of that noble mansion became almost at once "known to society." An the lamented death of Lady Kennel, some months ago, the executors of the estate decided to offer the house for sale, and it was duly advertised by James Shand.

On the day of sale Shand was there in all his glory, and before him a group of prospective buyers, one of them the wife of an ex-Mayor of Halifax. Shand started the property at \$12,000, and then he dilated on its attractions in his florid and eloquent style. He spoke in glowing terms of the attractive situation of the property, and of its excellent condition. Branching out Shand reached the height of his peroration as he told of the noble family that so had made the house a centre of everything that was good and pleasant and hospitable and how they made it the centre of the best social life of this old and aristocratic city, and he laid particular stress on the quality of the title. The auctioneer stopped, and his pause was as eloquent as had been his well worded praise of the magnificent property.

He waited for an advance on the \$12,000 at which the property had been started. Then a voice was heard offering an advance of \$200, making the price \$12,200. It was the estimable wife of an ex-mayor who was the bidder. Shand, encouraged by his early success made further appeals for a better price, and no one except such as had no money or no desire for a lovely mansion could have resisted him. There could have been none of that class present, except the fair bidder, for no other offer was forthcoming. Accordingly the property was knocked down to the wife of the ex-mayor at \$12,200. She was the subject of many congratulations.

A day or two passed by and the auctioneer waited patiently and without the slightest misgiving. Time still went on, however, and the bargain was not ratified by the payment of a deposit to bind the sale, though the lady's signature had been affixed to the auctioneer's sales-book. Then the husband was waited on, and asked to proceed with the transaction. At this point Shand's heart fell as well as the heart of the executors for whom he was acting. The ex-mayor repudiated the bid; expressed himself as satisfied with his present abode, though admitting that the new property was a fine one and worth more than \$12,200; yet he did not need it.

The matter was handed to the lawyer's to adjust, and to see if the husband could not be forced to take possession of the house on the strength of the wife's bid. It is generally understood, however, that they can do nothing of the kind. A man is responsible for ordinary household debts contracted by his wife, but he cannot be held for any such transaction as this. All the debt a wife can legally contract in her husband's name is for what her household in the particular station of life in which it happens to be, may reasonably require. If a woman of ordinary means were to order at one stroke \$1000 worth of silk dresses for instance, or it, as in the case under consideration, she buys a magnificent house, which cannot be reasonably held to be required, then, it seems the husband is not responsible for the debt—it he refuse to take possession. This refusal the ex-mayor, so far, persists in. It may, therefore, be necessary, once more, to offer the mansion at auction.

It is said that the would-be purchaser of this property, when Shand dwelt on the value and quality of the title, believed that the title the auctioneer referred to was not that the deed was perfect in every particular but that the title mentioned was some right to the succession to the knighthood possessed by Sir Edward. No one takes this story seriously, however. What was wanted was a good house in the fashionable part of the city—something which the ex-mayor himself was not especially desirous of obtaining to induce him to pay \$12,200.

His Bark Worse Than His Bite.

HALIFAX, April 9.—The way the trouble between Lawyer Joseph Smith and Police station one night, and Fitzpatrick alleges was intoxicated and abusive, so much so that the policeman looked up the barrister and kept him behind the bars all night. In

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the morning there were six charges set forth on the pages of the police book. In the meanwhile Smith brought a counter charge of assault against the policeman. The trial came up before Stipendiary Fielding, and the magistrate adjourned the case for a day or two to allow Smith to obtain witnesses. In the meantime influences were brought into play, about which Chief O'Sullivan knew nothing whatever, but which resulted in the policeman's non-appearance on the day of trial. Consequently the lawyer was acquitted the charge of assault against Fitzpatrick was not heard from. People are now asking which erred most on the night of the row in the police station—Fitzpatrick or Smith.

J. T. Bulmer had a heavy grievance against the same lawyer for another matter about the same time, and there was talk of dread punishment in another place than Stipendiary Fielding's court. The barrister's society was to be asked to take action and investigate a charge that this lawyer made improper representations to obtain evidence from a client of Bulmer's. This, too, seems to have melted into thin air. Brother Bulmer's bark is always worse than his bite.

END OF A FAMOUS SUIT.

Settlement of the Customs Case of Messrs. Shatford and Eckerley.

HALIFAX, April 9.—PROGRESS readers will remember the fierce controversy which raged two years ago in this city between John Eckerley of the customs department and Shatford Bros., oil merchants. Eckerley was accused of wantonly worrying and inconveniencing this firm and of obstructing them in their business. Over and over again they complained, and finally they brought an action at law against Eckerley, claiming damages "for the conversion and detention of 65 cases of Shatford Brothers' oil." Eckerley had done so, as he alleged, because he believed the customs regulations had been infringed. For two years the case has been hanging on and has been settled on the quiet within the past few days, each side paying the other the sum of one dollar, no costs being charged against either party, and the suit withdrawn.

Mr. Eckerley made a big kick against this settlement, being anxious for a fight to a finish in the courts with Shatford Brothers. But he had to bow to the inevitable. Eckerley held that he was not consulted as to the action being withdrawn, that Shatford's allegations had been "unjust and false," and that he was prepared to prove justification for all he had done. He, at first, declined to agree to the settlement unless he was tendered an apology by Shatford Brothers for what he called their persecution. At the same time, as Mr. Eckerley's defence had been assumed by the customs department's lawyers without expense to him, he informed the department that he considered he must obey their wishes in the matter, as he understood the Ottawa authorities desired that the suit should be ended. In informing the customs department of this decision Mr. Eckerley gave a full statement of his view of the trouble with the Shatfords coupled with some rather severe reflections on Inspector Hill's part in the affair. The controller of customs replied in some such language as this:

"I ask that you will sign the agreement for withdrawal of the suit, and thus end the matter, and no further charges or recrimination be made, as it is not desirable that you, as one of our officers, should continue this quarrel with the parties. The object of the department in allowing settlement was to remove the unpleasantness that has existed for some time and I have to require that you desist from any further proceedings in the matter."

The department at Ottawa received this reply from Mr. Eckerley.

"I am glad to hear that Shatford brothers have asked permission to withdraw their suit against you, which, to my mind, shows

that your position has been the right one in this case."

Thus ends in darkness, the celebrated case between Shatford Brothers and John Eckerley, in which the latter was threatened with things dreadful, and in which the former was to make as great a commotion.

Due to Musicians Jealousy.

HALIFAX, Apr. 9.—The jealousy of musicians is proverbial. An instance of this undesirable characteristic was forthcoming during the visit of Albani to this city last week. The prima donna came under the management of A. E. Harris, of Montreal, and for her second performance a chorus was organized at Harris' request, conducted by W. J. Hutchins, organist of St. Paul's, Albani's appearance was the great musical event of the year and her advent under the auspices under which she came seems to have thoroughly awakened the green-eyed monster. Proof of this was in evidence from day to day, and from what was said it became apparent to everybody the night after the second performance, when a violent criticism appeared in one of the evening papers signed A. the proper initial that should have followed the article in question is said to be a letter found near the middle of the alphabet and which stands for a name prominent in musical circles. Albani's singing was described as painful to listen to; she was set down as a musical back-number, accused of bad taste in the way she made her entrance to the stage and the manner of her exits, and crocodile tears were shed over Albani's "departed glories." It is needless to say the criticism does not meet the views of the people of Halifax, who paid between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to hear her in two concerts, but it shows how circumstances alter the complexion of some people's views. By the way, the receipts of the second concert were just 75 cents in excess of the first.

Got a Stern Lesson.

HALIFAX, April 9.—Some lawyers have been making ado about a Russian Jew—Charles Stern who was arrested on a charge of grand larceny, on the strength of a telegram from the New York police. It now turns out that it was quite a simple matter; that Stern was illegally arrested, and that he will sue the New York people who used the gotham police to capture a man against whom no other than a civil action could have been brought for \$100,000. Chief O'Sullivan and the police here are also liable if Stern should take action against them, but there is not the slightest fear of his doing that, and no hope of his succeeding with a Halifax jury if he should proceed. The practical result of this business will be that the New York police will find the Halifax authorities much slower to respond to an appeal from them another time. Chief O'Sullivan and Detective Power will be very sure of what they are doing before they act on telegrams from the New York police again no matter how urgent they may be. One such stern lesson as this Russian Jew has been the means of giving, will be remembered for several seasons.

A Dog in Pawn.

Even dogs are pawned in New York, writes a correspondent. In a place on Twenty-eighth street a lonely pug separated from his fellows, gazed wistfully at customers yesterday. "How much for that one?" asked a stranger as he pointed toward the pug. "Can't sell him until Monday night," replied the bird and dog dealer. The man wanted to know why, and he was informed that the pug was in pawn, and if he wasn't redeemed prior to the time mentioned he would be sold. "That pug's been hocked three times and has always been redeemed. How much do I loan on him?" A dollar's the limit, sir, as pugs are no longer popular, you know. When a woman puts her pet dog in pawn it is quite safe to conclude that the wolf has entered her apartment.

There is great activity in railroad-car building this year. So far 12,500 cars have been built and most of the builders have large orders on hand.

HE COULD FIGHT.

One Blow Secured a School for the Pale, Thin Young Man.

In the mountains of the south the schools are still maintained upon the subscription plan. A traveling man just returned from that section gave the following account of an examination of an applicant for a school:

"I was stopping at a cabin all night," said he, "and a pale, slender young man came during the evening to talk with my host."

"I am thinking of starting a school here," he said, "and I wanted to see if you would subscribe."

"Kin yo' read?"

"Yes."

"Kin yo' write?"

"Certainly."

"Kin yo' figger?"

"Of course."

"Air yo' married?"

"No."

"Wall, we did not want a married man nex time. The las' three teachers has run off with gals, an' thar ain't enuff gals in this hyar neighborhood now. But I don s'pose none of 'em would want a lean feller like yo'. I don't reckon yo' not bein married 'll make much difference. Could' n't expect sich a polly feller ter be married. Ten thar's one thing. Me an' Bill Simpkins an' Al Toney is all gwine ter school an' larn ter read an' write. I done hocked Bill an' he done hocked Alf, so I reckon the only one ter settle with is me. We ain't gwine to bay no man we kin hick. Kin yo' foun'?"

"I studied boxing," said the stranger.

"Don't know nothin' bout thet. Does makin' boxes make muscals?"

"Try one and see," was the cool rejoinder.

The big mountaineer hit at the little man, and when he regained consciousness he had his head in the wood box and his feet sticking up in the air.

Looking about him with a dazed expression, he said:

"Young feller, shake. I'll go with yo' some day an' we'll git thet school. An' say, young feller, set ue ter work on them boxes, will yo'?"—Washington Star.

"Endora," is the name of the new black dress fabric put upon the market by the Priestly's, whose famous dress goods are a household word all over the world. It is like their much esteemed Henrietta cloths; in deed, it has all their merits, and a few things which they lack. It is made in black only, it is a perfect dust shedder; has extra weight and width; and, fitting easily and draping gracefully it gives a distinction to the wearer which all of Priestly goods confer. This is their excellence, which sets them apart from all other goods. Wrapped on "The Varished Board," and Priestly's name stamped on every five yards.

X Rays in Court.

The new photography has not been long in getting seriously to work, and at Nottingham, England, it has taken a prominent place as a witness in a lawsuit. Miss Gladys Fiollett, an actress, brought an action for damages against the Nottingham Theatre Co. She had injured her foot, she said, through a faulty staircase in the theatre. It was of no use for the defendants to argue that the plaintiff's foot was not injured, for she promptly went and had her bones photographed by Prof. Ramsay, and produced the negative in court; and the jury, holding that negative evidence is the most positive, awarded her appropriate damages.

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