5 Complete Stories 5

The Black Cat

1899

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E. F. Bishop.

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G. B. Dunham.

Ely's Automatic Housemaid.
Elizabeth W. Bellamy.

The Curse of Zulma Rebey.
Rheta Childe Dorr.

To Save a Stainless Name.
Catharine Young Glen.

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A Postal Card Tragedy.*

BY E. F. BISHOP.


O dubt Sir Rowland Hill foresaw much of the enormous increase of correspondence which his great penny postage reform was sure to cause, and he survived to witness a great part of it in his own country, and indeed even lived to see the post card, and to know of the introduction of its American cousin, the postal card, into the United States.

But even his sanguine mind could not have conceived of the extravagant fashion in which the “postals” were welcomed by Americans, to whom they doubly recommended themselves by their convenience and novelty. In the early seventies thousands were bought and sent by everybody to anybody—about anything. It was an amusement so fascinating and inexpensive that the young fairly revelled in it.

George Reade was a member of a junior class in a well-known boys’ school in which the “craze” had an extensive run. The boys bought them by the pack and showered them upon relatives, friends and acquaintances, and finally upon entire strangers. The newspapers told of one ingenious writer who succeeded in having

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a card sent round the world and returned to him—a performance which the postal regulations now forbid—and young Reade’s schoolmates emulated the achievement, but without success. Then they began to write absurd messages to creatures of their imagination. No replies were expected or received, but the boys delighted in showing each other these foolish productions and chuckling over imaginary annoyances of rural postmasters in remote regions in endeavoring to find claimants for “postals” that never would be called for.

The specialty which George Reade had determined to master was mineralogy, with a view to ultimate mining, and of course, an eventual fortune. The waste places on the maps in his atlas—those marked “unknown” and “unexplored”—had for him an especial attraction, and any large district in the great West where few towns were marked his fancy readily filled with auriferous ledges, mother-lodes and El Dorado pockets. Maps of northwestern States he found particularly interesting, so much of them was blank in those days, save for a few devious streams and a host of little lakes, mostly unnamed. In the northern half of one State there was scarcely a post-office indicated. This was before Reade had heard of “star routes,” but he had just familiarized himself with the postal card, and felt that here would be a grand way to stimulate the postal service and call the attention of the authorities to the needs of a slighted section, for he was convinced that there must be some inhabitants in such a great stretch of country.

Accordingly, he determined to bring to the attention of the Post-office Department the lack of facilities in this neglected region. Directly in the centre of the emptiest portion of the map he found a long, narrow, winding lake, named “Vermilion.” No settlement appeared anywhere within scores of miles, but of course there ought to be a settlement—with a post-office—in such an eligible site, and naturally it should take its name from the lake. So Reade sat down and carefully addressed a postal as follows:

JOHN W. WATSON,
VERMILION LAKE,
SHERIDAN COUNTY,
MINNESOTA, U. S. A.
Why he wrote Watson at all — much less John W. — he did not know then and does not know now. He never knew personally a Watson, and never has, to this day. But telepathy antedates wireless telegraphy. However, Reade was seeking for no explanation, occult or otherwise, of this choice of a name, but was intent only at the time on the composition of his missive to the unknown Watson, which finally took this form:

TILTON HALL, ALBANY, N. Y., JUNE 5, 1874.

My Dear Watson:

Don't forget your promise to find a good vein for me. I shall reach your place in the spring of 84, with tools, powder and provisions. Have boats ready for me.

Your true friend,

GEORGE A. READE.

Young Reade's mind was full of mines and mining, and, knowing nothing to the contrary, he assumed all the rocks in the region selected to be metalliferous. So he gloated over the puzzle which he supposed this absurd card would afford to numerous postal clerks and postmasters, not imagining that they would read nothing but the addressed side. He was educated, of course, above the grade of those who address acquaintance and stranger alike as "friend," and he could not have told why he employed that form, unless it were an unconscious assumption of the inferior social rank of his mythical correspondent. However, Reade dropped his card, the last of the kind he ever wrote, in the nearest mail box, and soon forgot all about it.

In 1877 he had completed his course in this preparatory school and entered a scientific institution, from which he was graduated in due course as a mining engineer. The first position he obtained was not a particularly promising one, but he was soon sent West on a fair salary, and now fully embarked on a career in which practice speedily displaced theory, he was here, there and everywhere among Western mining camps.

In June, 1884, George Reade arrived in Denver, and found there awaiting him a quantity of mail matter, including a letter from his mother, enclosing a postal card addressed to him at Albany, forwarded by the principal of his old preparatory school. It read:

dear george

vermilion lake may 25 1884

the ice is gone out of the lake some time why aint you come yet I have everything already. Come quick bring powder and grub plese hurry up

your Friend

J W WATSON
Reade was mystified. He read the card twice, looked at the address again, saw that it surely was directed to him, and finally threw it into the waste basket, being unable to decide whether it was simply a mistake or a joke.

Two or three weeks later his mother enclosed him a second postal card in the same hand as the first. It said:

"For God's sake come soon if you don't some of these fellows may jump it and I am stone broke. I tell you the show is a good one and nobody is on to it but me."

Your friend

John

"Well," thought Reade, "this is odd." In vain he cudgelled his memory. He knew no one of the name of Watson, had no familiar "friend" John, and had made no agreement to go anywhere, with anybody. So he threw his second card away.

Ten days later came a third card, enclosed in an enquiry from Reade's mother as to what it all meant. The third card ran as follows:

"If you don't come why don't you rite be you sick I tell you this won't keep much longer and the winter comes early here."

This was too much for Reade. The distress of the writer seemed so genuine that he couldn't help feeling sorry for him, and yet he disliked very much being troubled with the lamentations of this unknown Jeremiah. "Where is Vermillion Lake, anyhow?" he wondered, as with cross words he tore up the puzzling communication.

By this time midsummer had arrived, and George went East on a vacation, well pleased with his Western successes, and eager to talk again with family and friends. Among the latter were two or three schoolmates, and they recalled old times with almost boyish interest. As he lit his pipe one evening one of them suddenly exclaimed:

"Do you remember our postal card craze? I believe I wrote cards to Bismarck and the King of Siam. What a funny freak it was!"

"Yes," replied George, "it seemed so ridiculously cheap in those days to send the equivalent of a letter — stamp, stationery and all — for a single cent. But I remember I always wrote my bogus epistles in the innocent supposition that they would be eagerly read by every postal employee who handled them. What kids we were!"
But when his friends had gone Reade's mind continued to dwell on this particular phase of boyhood's freaks, and in thinking of postal cards he could not dismiss from recollection his mysterious correspondent, Watson, and the desire to know the location of Vermilion Lake grew upon him. Taking down a Gazetteer, he found that there were a number of Vermilion Lakes but that he had never been near any of them. Obviously, he thought, he was not the Reade wanted by somebody somewhere, and so he shut the book and went to bed.

The next morning one of George's sisters brought in the mail. It contained still another card from "Watson," directed this time to his home and not, as the previous ones had been, to the school. The writer said:

why didn't you write me you had moved. mebbe you didn't get my other letters I am getting pretty low in grub so hurry up the boys all think I am crazy writing for you to come be quick and fetch lots of grub i have the vein alright. your friend

J W Watson

Reade's puzzle was renewed. He could make nothing of it. He had seen from the first that his correspondent was uneducated, but now when he studied the shaky writing it occurred to him that its sinuosities might be the result of the tremor of age. He regretted that he had not answered one of the previous cards, addressing it at random to Vermilion Lake, as a line would suffice to inform Watson that his communications were going to the wrong Reade. He resolved to write that very day, but forgot it altogether in some diversions planned by his sisters, and the matter did not surmount the threshold of consciousness again till he had returned to the West and the mail from home brought him a reminder in this shape:

for gods sake what is the matter why dont you come I am starving and you promised you would come last spring sure if you dont come soon it will be to late I cant hang on alone much longer minnesota winters begin early

Here was a practical hint which Reade now lost no time in following up. He wrote at once to Vermilion Lake, Minnesota—not on a postal card—informing Watson that he had received a number of cards from him evidently intended for some other Reade, and regretting that he had not been able to notify him sooner. This salved his conscience, and he supposed he had
heard the last of his unknown correspondent. But not long afterward he received the following:

dear gorge
not much i aint made no mistake didnt you rite me in '74 you would be here in the spring of '84 i have waited to long now winter is not far off bring six months grub i am half dead.
your frend

J W Watson

This was really astounding, and Reade could not get the matter out of his head, day or night. Who could this mysterious Watson be, and why was he afflicted with his disappointments? Procuring a Postal Guide, George found that there actually was a Vermilion Lake, Minnesota, and going to a map he looked up its exact location. While doing so his mind half-consciously reverted to his recent conversation with his schoolmates and traveled back to the days they had recalled, and in a flash, the resurrection of a long dormant memory, came a recollection of that last boyish postal card, written to some imaginary person ten years before, and he realized that he was the right George A. Reade, to whom all those puzzling cards had been written! What an absurd, thoughtless prank it had been, and now it had resulted in causing trouble, and apparently actual suffering, to a fellow-being of whose very existence he had been ignorant when he first wrote.

Full of contrition, he now wrote, explaining at length the circumstances under which the first card was written by a mere boy, expressing deep regret, and enquiring what he could do to make amends and especially why Watson seemed so eager to see him.

He was now deeply interested, and awaited with impatience a reply. From Watson's previous impatience he had expected promptness in this instance, but instead there was a long interval of silence. Then there came a rather official-looking document, bearing very distinctly the Vermilion Lake post-office stamp. It proved to be from the postmaster himself, and stated that John W. Watson had died there, after an illness of several weeks, leaving all his property to George A. Reade, but that all his visible effects consisted of an old rifle, a canoe and some papers whose contents were unknown. Enough had been realized from the sale of these few assets to defray funeral expenses, with the exception of a balance of $4.50. Would Mr. Reade please remit that
amount? Watson, the writer stated, had always spoken of Reade as the only friend he had in the world, and was always expecting a visit from him. The postmaster added that he feared the old man had really starved to death, having all summer, though too old to hunt or fish much, refused several offers of assistance, saying that his friend Reade was coming soon and would see him through.

George Reade dropped his work, and took the first train to a point where he could catch a stage for Vermilion Lake. Forty mile of rough riding took him to a collection of twenty or thirty log shanties, where the storekeeper's sign directed him to the post-office. A short, stout man came forward when that official was asked for, and to him Reade told his errand, and asked about Watson.

"We'l-l," said he, "John was a pecooliar cuss. Never knewed him, you say? He was mortal fond of you—never stopped talkin' 'bout you these last ten years. He had'a camp up the lake here, 'bout nine miles, and would mostly paddle down Saturday nights and set here talkin' 'bout you. Couldn't talk 'bout nothin' else, I guess. Said you was the only friend he ever had. He'd no family—said they was all dead—and that no man ever called him a friend but you; that is, outside of some of us fellers, but guess we didn't count. He wanted to see you pretty bad ever since last May—used to expect you every week, almost. Finally, 'bout last June, he came down here and stayed till he died. Said you was due every day, and used to write you postal cards. Said they was the best thing this government ever did—showed they thought of the poor man sometimes.

"We'l-l, toward the last he slept here, when he didn't sleep out, and he got lower and lower. Made me swear I would keep some papers he had and give 'em to you when you did come. Here they are. He had a hard time writin' 'em. He got pretty thin, and petered out after that. I sold his outfit, but kept them papers. No good, I suppose? Some of the boys thought he was sort of off in his head, but he wasn't—just queer. Yes, thank you, $4.50, that's right. He said you'd make up anythin' short. Wasn't any relation, you say?"

"No," answered Reade, "just a friend."
The “papers” consisted of a few sheets of white wrapping paper, such as storekeepers use, laboriously covered with pencil writing, in a large, cramped hand. The one of greatest immediate interest to Reade was as follows:

Dear George,

I can’t last any longer you oughter come in the spring you was the only friend I ever had I kept yure card and waited & mebbe I waited to long the iron is there & you can find it all right by following up back of my place to the big pine with the X blaze then go N E about 100 rod to a big rock covered with moss you cant miss it. then go East 20 rod to a dull pine then N to where the ledge crops out and follow it east to the big birch it ain’t fur off about 50 feat you will find it shure. Put in a blast or too I was on my last legs I knew the stuff was there but I had no money and grub is high all my Family is ded it is all yourn stuff was the only friend I had on eth that is expt the boys who said I was crazy Why didn’t you come in the spring Irote you six times I hope you aint sick as I am and the grub give out.

Your friend
J W Watson

Beneath this farewell letter were papers fully establishing Watson’s homestead and mineral claims, and last of all was the postal card which Reade had written him when a boy. His eyes were moist and his lip trembled when he laid aside the packet.

Have you seen the Watson Hospital, on a high, breezy bluff, overlooking the dancing waters of Lake Superior? Yes, it cost a large sum. George A. Reade paid the bills, but he says he did it with John W. Watson’s money. Perhaps you also noticed the Old Miners’ Home, near by? That was paid for, too, with Watson’s money, or, at least, with the proceeds of the iron ore he found and guarded so faithfully. Reade declares he only worked the vein when it was too late to do Watson any good.

Reade’s eldest boy is named Watson — John Watson Reade. They call him Watson for short. But George A. Reade will not tolerate a postal card, in his home, at his office, or about his business in any way, and it gives him a heartache when he sees one.
The Gratitude of Mrs. Hatch.*

BY G. B. DUNHAM.

BEN MORRISON, the big bluffer of the sheriff’s office, with his understudy, the junior deputy, was sent out into the country, a matter of fifty miles or so, to make an arrest on an indictment for rustling cattle. He brought in his man alive, but unconscious, pretty well bruised, and with a dent in his occiput about the size and shape of the butt of the deputy’s revolver.

Now, the sheriff’s office had been down on its luck all summer, and it was of a piece with the rest that the Grand Jury, just then in annual session, instead of commending the success of Morrison, should listen instead to the prosecuting attorney and to a witness whom he hurried in from the back country, and find a true bill against Benjamin Morrison and William Judd, “that they did, upon the said 25th day of August, assault with intent to kill one Job Hatch, contrary to the law in such cases made and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth aforesaid.” The sole remaining deputy turned the key upon his associates, and for a time the sheriff’s office was woefully short-handed, for the chief said, “If the public rather pay my men for keeping the jail full in that way, it’s all the same to me, and less trouble, but I’ll not appoint another man.”

The incarcerated deputies were indignant, but not alarmed. They had, on their return, given a straightforward account of the circumstances attending the injury to Hatch, which statement they repeated without deviation at the trial. The sheriff said the thing was a dirty political trick of the county attorney. The attorney said he was sure of securing a conviction, and the prosecuting witness, pending the trial, said nothing. There were no dilatory motions from either side — in fact both urged a speedy

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trial — and the case came up within ten days after the indictment. During this interval the condition of the unfortunate man at the hospital was unchanged. He lay unconscious and without speech. His wife never left him but when she went before the jury, and her name appeared upon the indictment as prosecuting witness.

Morrison and Judd scarcely recognized the gravity of their situation until they were brought into court upon the day of trial. That it was to be no perfunctory prosecution was evidenced by the attendance of an eminent attorney, "imported," as the defence phrased it, "to hamstring the jury."

The jury being finally secured by the usual practice of carefully excluding everybody who knew anything about the case, I found myself one of the twelve men duly sworn to hear the evidence and true judgment give between the people and the prisoners at the bar. Then the visiting lawyer with the keen eye and the soft voice, whose habit it was to work jurors as the potter works his clay, gave us his opening statement.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I should not be in this case at all but for a woman's tears. A great wrong has been done. You cannot right it — no one can. What you can do, and what we expect you to do, is to punish the wrong-doers. We shall prove to you that the officers went to the house of this poor man, sought a quarrel with him, beat him unmercifully and brought him down here to die. We shall prove this by his wife, who saw it, whose presence did not deter these ruffians, whose tears at length prevailed on me to prosecute this suit."

Replying to this opening, the defence said to the jury: "In a neighboring city a big brick block, some twelve stories high, bears the name of the opposing counsel. It was not built with woman's tears. The twenty farms he owns were never bought with tears. He works for cash only, and in advance, and in this instance the cash comes from the coffers of a political committee. We shall show that the unfortunate man was hurt by an accident resulting from his own bad temper, and to which the defendants were not in any manner contributory."

After the evidence of the attending surgeon, who declined to swear that the blow was or was not struck with a revolver, Mrs. Hatch was put on the stand. Her story was this: Only one man
came to her house — Morrison. He found Hatch at home, and, without showing his papers or stating his business, interfered with the ranchman's treatment of a vicious cow. Hatch was unarmed and no physical match for Morrison. After some altercation he ran toward the house; Morrison overtook him and felled him with a blow on the back of the head.

Upon cross-examination Mrs. Hatch contradicted herself in some minor matters and broke down. But she was solid as a rock on the main fact — that her husband was struck down by the officer. Throughout her testimony Morrison gave the closest attention, and, if I could read the expression on his face, it was one of doubt and surprise. He looked not like a man hearing the faithful account of his own misdeed, but as if he were hearing a shocking story for the first time. I made a mental note in Morrison's favor, but later, when he himself testified, I rubbed it out and went over to the woman's side.

The court will always caution jurors against coming to a conclusion before the evidence is in. But in this case I came to several, all of them erroneous, in the course of the trial.

The testimony of Morrison and Judd was as different as possible from that of Mrs. Hatch. According to their statement, which the ingenuity of opposing counsel tried in vain to break or shake, they had not reached Hatch's house when they met him in the road. In a country where every man knows and values a good horse they had at once noticed the fine mount of Hatch, and had engaged him in a conversation which ultimately in a horse race, with twenty dollars up, between Hatch and Judd.

"I'll give you a good beating," shouted Hatch, as Morrison started them down a strip of level highway. But his fine-looking horse was just a bit too fat to go up against Judd's wiry bronce, and he was beaten by a short length. Seeing which, Hatch hit his horse upon the head with the quirt, causing him to rear and fall upon his rider.

That was the whole story the men had to tell — succinct, complete, but not convincing. Over and over, on cross-examination it was repeated by both men like a well learned lesson. Looking and listening I make up my mind that this evidence was false; ergo, the woman's was true.
After the arguments of counsel and the verbal fireworks of the imported lawyer, who never made arguments, but always and everywhere stump-speeches, the learned judge charged us at great length to find the defendants guilty if they were guilty, and not guilty if they were innocent, and we were locked up.

In the jury room Judd, of course, was acquitted on the first ballot. The feeling was strong, but not unanimous, against Morrison. He had a friend or two who were stout in his defence. They urged that Morrison might kill a man on occasion — had done so perhaps — but never from behind.

There was much argument and no agreement until, late in the evening, contrary to every rule of law and in contempt of court, some new evidence was submitted to the jury. It came in the form of a note to me from my friend the doctor, shoved under the door of the jury room behind the bailiff's back. It read as follows:

GEORGE: — At noon to-day Dr. Marston and myself operated on Job Hatch. It was only one chance in a hundred that the man would stand it, but as he could not possibly recover without it, we took that chance, and lost. He died within an hour. After trepanning he spoke a number of words indicating excitement. The only connected sentence was, "I'll give you a good beating." I thought you ought to know.

WILL.

Those were exactly the words testified as used by Hatch at the alleged horse-race, and the note, thrown into the scale of conflicting opinion in the jury, turned the balance in favor of Morrison, and he also was acquitted.

In another part of the West, years later, I made a long wagon journey with Morrison. I came to know his brave nature well, and proved his worth on many occasions. One night, under the summer stars, when the camp-fires burned low, I said to him without prelude,

"Ben, who killed Job Hatch?"

After a silence, "His wife."

"Are you sure?"

"I saw it. I went out there to arrest him and he was beating his wife. As I rode up she grabbed the gun from his holster and hit him. It was a chance blow, but the woman was frenzied and it felled him like an ox. He got about what he deserved and I
told the woman that I'd see her through. Of course, any jury would have cleared her on the facts, but she had been a girl well connected and said she'd rather die than have her people know. So I did what I did."

"But," I cried, "what was the occasion for her bad faith? Why did she try to fasten the deed on you?"

After another pause and the lighting of another pipe Ben replied slowly: "I don't know. I have tried to follow a good many trails into a woman's mind, but they are always blind trails. They lead nowhere. My guess is that she tried to do me up because I went there to arrest her husband for a thief. No sooner was he gone than she began to idealize him, and she was as fierce against me in his defence as she had been against him in her own. That's my guess, but all I absolutely know is that she seemed very grateful to me for my promise to shield her. And two days after I got the worst jolt of my life when I was locked up to answer her charges."

"You must have known before the trial came on," said I, "what the woman meant to testify. Why not then have given the court the facts? Why did you stand by her in spite of herself?"

No answer.

I wanted to get from him an avowal that he thought he had done a brave and generous thing.

"Supposing you had been convicted on her testimony?" I persisted.

But Morrison only said quietly, "Then you would be making this journey alone."
Ely's Automatic Housemaid.*

BY ELIZABETH W. BELLAMY.

In order for a man to have faith in such an invention, he would have to know Harrison Ely. For Harrison Ely was a genius. I had known him in college, a man amazingly dull in Latin and Greek and even in English, but with ideas of his own that could not be expressed in language. His bent was purely mechanical, and found expression in innumerable ingenious contrivances to facilitate the study to which he had no inclination. His self-acting lexicon-holder was a matter of admiring wonder to his classmates, but it did not serve to increase the tenacity of his mental grasp upon the contents of the volume, and so did little to recommend him to the faculty. And his self-feeding safety student-lamp admirably illuminated everything for him save the true and only path to an honorable degree.

It had been years since I had seen him or thought of him, but the memory is tenacious of small things, and the big yellow envelope which I found one morning awaiting me upon my breakfast-table brought his eccentric personality back to me with a rush. It was addressed to me in the Archimedean script always so characteristic of him, combining, as it seemed to do, the principles of the screw and of the inclined plane, and in its superscription Harrison Ely stood unmistakably revealed.

It was the first morning of a new cook, the latest potentate of a dynasty of ten who had briefly ruled in turn over our kitchen and ourselves during the preceding three months, and successively abdicated in favor of one another under the compelling influences of popular clamor, and in the face of such a political crisis my classmate's letter failed to receive immediate attention. Unfortunately but not unexpectedly the latest occupant of our

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culinary throne began her reign with no conspicuous reforms, and we received in gloomy silence her preliminary enactments in the way of greasy omelette and turbid and flavorless coffee, the yellow screed of Harrison Ely looking on the while with bilious sympathy as it leaned unopened against the water-bottle beside me.

As I drained the last medicinal drop of coffee my eye fell upon it, and needing a vicarious outlet for my feelings toward the cook, I seized it and tore it viciously open. It contained a letter from my classmate and half a dozen printed circulars. I spread open the former, and my eye fastened at once upon this sympathetic exordium:

"Doubtless, my dear friend, you have known what discomfort it is to be at the mercy of incompetent domestics—"

But my attention was distracted at this point by one of the circulars, which displayed an array of startling, cheering, alluring words, followed by plentiful exclamation points, that, like a bunch of keys, opened to my enraptured vision the gates of a terrestrial Paradise, where Bridgets should be no more, and where ill-cooked meals should become a mechanical impossibility. The boon we had been sighing for now presented itself for my acceptance, an accomplished fact. Harrison Ely had invented "An Automatic Household Beneficent Genius.—A Practical Realization of the Fabled Familiar of the Middle Ages." So the circular set forth.

Returning to the letter, I read that Harrison Ely, having exhausted his means in working out his invention, was unable to manufacture his "machine" in quantity as yet; but that he had just two on hand which he would sell in order to raise some ready money. He hoped that I would buy one of his automatons, and aid him to sell the other.

Never did a request come at a more propitious moment. I had, always entertained a kindness for Harrison Ely, and now such was my disgust at the incompetence of Bridget and Juliana and their predecessors that I was eager to stake the price of a "Household Beneficent Genius" on the success of my friend's invention.

So, having grasped the purport of the circulars and letter, I broke forth to my wife:

"My dear, you've heard me speak of Harrison Ely—"
"That man who is always so near doing something great, and never has done anything?" said she.

"He has done it at last!" I declared. "Harrison Ely is one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever seen. He has invented an 'Automatic-Electric Machine-Servant.'"

My wife said, "Oh!"

There was not an atom of enthusiasm in that. "Oh!" but I was not to be daunted.

"I am ready," I resumed, "to invest my bottom dollar in two of Harrison Ely's machine-servants."

Her eyes were fixed upon me as if they would read my very soul. "What do they cost?" she mildly asked.

"In comparison with the benefits to be derived, little enough. Listen!" I seized a circular at random, and began to read:

"The Automatic Household Genius, a veritable Domestic Fairy, swift, silent, sure; a Permanent, Inalienable, First-class Servant, warranted to give Satisfaction."

"Ah!" said my wife; and the enthusiasm that was lacking in the "Oh!" made itself eloquent in that "Ah!" "What is the price?" she asked again.

"The price is all right, and we are going to try the experiment."

"Are we though?" said she, between doubt and desire.

"Most assuredly; it will be a saving in the end. I shall write to Harrison Ely this very night."

The return mail brought me a reply stating that two Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Geniiuses had been shipped me by express. The letter enclosed a pamphlet that gave a more particular account of the E. A. H. B. G. than the circulars contained. My friend's invention was shaped in the likeness of the human figure, with body, head, arms, legs, hands and feet. It was clad in waterproof cloth, with a hood of the same to protect the head, and was shod with felt. The trunk contained the wheels and springs, and in the head was fixed the electric battery. The face, of bisque, was described as possessing "a very natural and pleasing expression."

Just at dusk an oblong box arrived by express and was duly delivered in our hall, but at my wife's urgent entreaty I consented not to unpack the machines until next day.
ELY'S AUTOMATIC HOUSEMAID.

"If we should not get the knack of managing them, they might give us trouble," said this wise wife of mine.

I agreed to this, and having sent away Bridget with a week's wages, to the satisfaction of all parties, we went to bed in high hopes.

Early next morning we were astir.

"My dear," I said, "do not give yourself the least concern about breakfast; I am determined that Harrison's invention shall have fair play."

"Very well," my wife assented; but she prudently administered bread and butter to her offspring.

I opened the oblong box, where lay the automatons side by side, their hands placidly folded upon their waterproof breasts, and their eyes looking placidly expectant from under their waterproof hoods.

I confess the sight gave me a shock. Anna Maria turned pale; the children hid their faces in her skirts.

"Once out of the box," I said to myself, "and the horror will be over."

The machines stood on their feet admirably, but the horror was not materially lessened by this change of position. However, I assumed a bold front, and said, jocosely:

"Now, which is Bridget, and which is Juliana—which the cook, and which the housemaid?"

This distinction was made clear by dial-plates and indicators, set conspicuously between the shoulders, an opening being cut in the waterproof for that purpose. The housemaid's dial-plate was stamped around the circumference with the words: Bed, Broom, Duster, Door-bell, Dining-room Service, Parlor Service, etc. In like manner, the cook's dial-plate bore the words that pertained to her department. I gave myself first to "setting" the housemaid, as being the simpler of the two.

"Now, my dear," said I, confidently, "we shall see how this Juliana can make the beds."

I proceeded, according to the pamphlet's directions, to point the indicator to the word "Bed." Next, as there were three beds to be made, I pushed in three of the five little red points surrounding the word. Then I set the "clock" connected with the indica-
tor, for a thirty minutes' job, thinking it might take about ten minutes to a bed. I did not consult my wife, for women do not understand machinery, and any suggestion of hesitancy on my part would have demoralized her.

The last thing to be done was to connect the indicator with the battery, a simple enough performance in itself, but the pamphlet of directions gave a repeated and red-lettered "CAUTION," never to interfere with the machine while it was at work! I therefore issued the command, "Non-combatants to the rear!" and was promptly obeyed.

What happened next I do not pretend to account for. By what subtle and mysterious action of electricity, by what unerring affinity, working through a marvellous mechanism, that Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Genius, whom—or which, for short—we called Juliana, sought its appropriate task, is the inventor's secret. I don't undertake to explain, I merely narrate. With a "click" the connection was made, and the new Juliana went up-stairs at a brisk and business-like pace.

We followed in breathless amazement. In less than five minutes, bed number one was made, and in a twinkling the second was taken in hand, and number three also was fairly accomplished, long before the allotted thirty minutes had expired. By this time, familiarity had somewhat dulled that awe and wonder with which we had gaped upon the first performance, and I beheld a smile of hopeful satisfaction on my wife's anxious countenance.

Our youngest, a boy aged three, was quick to feel the genial influence of this smile, and encouraged thereby, he bounced into the middle of the first bed. Hardly had he alighted there, when our automaton, having finished making the third bed, returned to her first job, and, before we could imagine mischief, the mattresses were jerked about, and the child was tumbled, headforemost on the floor!

Had the flesh-and-blood Juliana been guilty of such an act, she should have been dismissed on the spot; but, as it was, no one of us ventured so much as a remonstrance. My wife lifted the screaming child, and the imperturbable machine went on to readjust the bed with mechanical exactitude.

At this point a wild shout of mingled exultation, amazement and
terror arose from below, and we hastened down-stairs to find our son John hugging his elbows and capering frantically in front of the kitchen-door, where the electric cook was stirring empty nothing in a pan, with a zeal worthy a dozen eggs.

My eldest hopeful, impelled by that spirit of enterprise and audacity characteristic of nine-year-old boys, had ventured to experiment with the kitchen automaton, and by sheer accident had effected a working connection between the battery and the indicator, and the machine, in “going off,” had given the boy a blow that made him feel, as he expressed it, “like a funny-bone all over.”

“And served you right!” cried I. The thing was set for an hour and a half of work, according to the showing of the dial-plate, and no chance to stop it before I must leave for my office. Had the materials been supplied, we might have had breakfast; but, remembering the red-lettered “caution,” we dared not supply materials while that indefatigable spoon was gyrating in the empty pan. For my distraction, Kitty, my daughter of seven years, now called to me from up-stairs:

“Papa, you better come, quick! It’s a-tearin’ up these beds!”

“My dear,” I sighed, “there’s no way to stop it. We’ll have to wait for the works to run down. I must call Harrison’s attention to this defect. He ought to provide some sort of brake.”

We went up-stairs again. The B. G. Juliana stood beside the bed which she had just torn up for the sixth or seventh time, when suddenly she became, so to speak, paralyzed; her arms, in the act of spreading the sheets, dropped by her sides, her back stiffened, and she stood absolutely motionless, leaving her job unfinished—the B. G. would move no more until duly “set” again.

I now discovered that I was hungry. “If that Fiend in the kitchen were only at work about something substantial, instead of whipping the air into imaginary omelettes!” I groaned.

“Never mind,” said my wife; “I’ve a pot of coffee on the kerosene stove.”

Bless her! She was worth a thousand Beneficent Geniuses, and so I told her.

I did not return until late, but I was in good spirits, and I greeted my wife gayly:
“Well, how do they work?”

“Like fiends!” my usually placid helpmeet replied, so vehemently that I was alarmed. “They flagged at first,” she proceeded, excitedly, “and I oiled them, which I am not going to do, ever again. According to the directions, I poured the oil down their throats. It was horrible! They seemed to me to drink it greedily.”

“Nonsense! That’s your imagination.”

“Very well,” said Anna Maria. “You can do the oiling in future. They took a good deal this morning; it wasn’t easy to stop pouring it down. And they worked—obstreperously. That Fiend in the kitchen has cooked all the provisions I am going to supply this day, but still she goes on, and it’s no use to say a word.”

“Don’t be absurd,” I remonstrated. “The thing is only a machine.”

“I’m not so sure about that!” she retorted. “As for the other one—I set it sweeping, and it is sweeping still!”

We ate the dinner prepared by the kitchen Fiend, and really, I was tempted to compliment the cook in a set speech, but recollected myself in time to spare Anna Maria the triumph of saying, “I told you so!”

Now, that John of mine, still in pursuit of knowledge, had spent the day studying Harrison Ely’s pamphlet, and he learned that the machines could be set, like an alarm-clock, for any given hour. Therefore, as soon as the Juliana had collapsed over a pile of dust in the middle of the hall, John, unknown to us, set her indicator to the broom-handle for seven o’clock the following morning. When the Fiend in the kitchen ran down, leaving everything in confusion, my much-tried wife persuaded me to give my exclusive attention to that machine, and the Juliana was put safely in a corner. Thus it happened that John’s interference escaped detection. I set Bridget’s indicator for kitchen-cleaning at seven-thirty the next morning.

“When we understand them better,” I said to my wife, “we will set their morning tasks for an earlier hour, but we won’t put it too early now, since we must first learn their ways.”

“That’s the trouble with all new servants,” said Anna Maria.

The next morning at seven-thirty, precisely, we were awakened by a commotion in the kitchen.
“By George Washington!” I exclaimed. “The Thing’s on time!”

I needed no urging to make me forsake my pillow, but Anna Maria was ahead of me.

“Now, my dear, don’t get excited,” I exhorted, but in vain.

“Don’t you hear?” she whispered, in terror. “The other one!—swe—eep—ing!” And she darted from the room.

I paused to listen, and heard the patter of three pairs of little bare feet across the hall up-stairs. The children were following their mother. The next sound I heard was like the dragging of a rug along the floor. I recognized this peculiar sound as the footsteps of the B. G. Then came a dull thud, mingled with a shout from Johnnie, a scream from my wife, and the terrified cries of the two younger children. I rushed out just in time to see John, in his night-clothes, with his hair on end, tear down-stairs like a streak of lightning. My little Kitty and the three-year-old baby stood clasped in each other’s arms at the head of the stairs, sobbing in terror, and, half-way down, was my wife, leaning over the railing, with ashen face and rigid body, her fascinated gaze fixed upon a dark and struggling mass in the hall below.

John, when he reached the bottom of the stairs, began capering like a goat gone mad, digging the floor with his bare heels, clapping his hands with an awful glee, and shouting:

“Bet your bottom dollar on the one that whips!”

The Juliana and the Bridget were fighting for the broom!

I comprehended the situation intuitively. The kitchen-cleaning, for which the Fiend had been “set,” had reached a point that demanded the broom, and that subtle, attractive affinity, which my friend’s genius had known how to produce, but had not learned to regulate, impelled the unerring automaton towards the only broom in the house, which was now in the hands of its fellow-automaton, and a struggle was inevitable. What I could not understand — Johnnie having kept his own counsel — was this uncontrollable sweeping impulse that possessed the Juliana.

However, this was no time for investigating the exact cause of the terrific row now going on in our front hall. The Beneficent Geniuses had each a firm grip of the broom-handle, and they might have performed the sweeping very amicably together, could
they but have agreed as to the field of labor, but their conflicting tendencies on this point brought about a rotary motion that sent them spinning around the hall, and kept them alternately cracking each other’s head with a violence that ought to have drawn blood. Considering their life-likeness, we should hardly have thought it strange if blood had flowed, and it would have been a relief had the combatants but called each other names, so much did their dumbness intensify the horror of a struggle, in the midst of which the waterproof hoods fell off, revealing their startlingly human countenances, not distorted by angry passions, but resolute, inexorable, calm, as though each was sustained in the contest by a lofty sense of duty.

“They’re alive! Kill ’em! Kill ’em, quick!” shrieked my wife, as the gyrating couple moved towards the stair-case.

“Let ’em alone,” said Johnnie — his sporting blood, which he inherits from his father, thoroughly roused — dancing about the automatic pugilists in delight, and alternately encouraging the one or the other to increased efforts.

Thus the fight went on with appalling energy and reckless courage on both sides, my wife wringing her hands upon the stair-case, our infants wailing in terror upon the landing above, and I wavering between an honest desire to see fair play and an apprehensive dread of consequences which was not unjustified.

In one of their frantic gyrations the figures struck the hat-rack and promptly converted it into a mass of splinters. In a minute more they became involved with a rubber plant — the pride of my wife’s heart — and distributed it impartially all over the premises. From this they caromed against the front door, wrecking both its stained-glass panes, and then down the length of the hall they sped again, fighting fiercely and dealing one another’s imperturbable countenances ringing blows with the disputed broom.

We became aware through Johnnie’s excited comments, that Juliana had lost an ear in the fray, and presently it was discernible that a fractured nose had somewhat modified the set geniality of expression that had distinguished Bridget’s face in its prime.

How this fierce and equal combat would have culminated if further prolonged no one but Harrison Ely can conjecture, but it came to an abrupt termination as the parlor clock chimed eight,
the hour when the two automatons should have completed their appointed tasks.

Though quite late at my office that morning, I wired Ely before attending to business. Long-haired, gaunt and haggard, but cheerful as ever, he arrived next day, on fire with enthusiasm. He could hardly be persuaded to refresh himself with a cup of coffee before he took his two recalcitrant Geniuses in hand. It was curious to see him examine each machine, much as a physician would examine a patient. Finally his brow cleared, he gave a little puff of satisfaction, and exclaimed:

"Why, man alive, there's nothing the matter— not a thing! What you consider a defect is really a merit—merely a surplus of mental energy. They've had too big a dose of oil. Few housekeepers have any idea about proper lubrication," and he emitted another little snort, at which my wife colored guiltily.

"I see just what's wanted," he resumed. "The will-power generated and not immediately expended becomes cumulative and gets beyond control. I'll introduce a little compensator, to take up the excess and regulate the flow. Then a child can operate them."

It was now Johnnie's turn to blush.

"Ship 'em right back to the factory, and we'll have 'em all right in a few days. I see where the mechanism can be greatly improved, and when you get 'em again I know you'll never consent to part with 'em!"

That was four months ago. The "Domestic Fairies" have not yet been returned from Harrison's laboratory, but I am confidently looking for the familiar oblong packing case, and expect any day to see in the papers the prospectus of the syndicate which Ely informs me is being "promoted" to manufacture his automatic housemaid.
The Curse of Zulma Rebya.*

BY RHETA CHILDE DORR.

N the latter half of the thirties, at the court of Louis Philippe, the democratic atmosphere brought by the "Citizen King" from his American sojourn was voted by old courtiers—especially the ladies—a very unsatisfactory substitute for the manners that went out when Charles X. departed into exile and the last traditions of the old régime went with him.

Sometimes there were fêtes, which had management more often than not converted into fiascos—in the opinion of the Faubourg Saint Germain—but there were those whom they amused and who could laugh with as well as at the fatuous monarch. Among them was Lady Florence Brooke, whose father—one of the most efficient statesmen of his day in England—was then in Paris on an important and delicate mission.

"I vow, cousin," she said, the morning after one of these incongruous gatherings, to Capt. Arbuthnot, a dashing young attaché, "I am in love with His Majesty. He is the only man in Paris who makes me laugh."

"The King is rather quaint at times," agreed the captain. "But I hope, for all that, dear Florence, you will not be tempted to laugh audibly."

"Never fear, I know why my father was sent here, and it will not be my fault if his mission fails."

"I am sorry you are so bored, my cousin," resumed the young Englishman, "but there are some amusing people in society besides the King. And that reminds me of some one who is anxious to be presented to you—none other than the renowned Count Abbas."

"And who is he—an Arab?"

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"An Egyptian—or, rather, a pure-blooded Turk. He is one of those whom old Mehemet Ali chose in carrying out his peculiarly Oriental scheme for the civilization of Egypt. He selected three hundred youths from good families, many of them from the very highest nobility, and sent them here to Europe, to be educated as engineers, naval officers, physicians and mechanics. When they came back he had them all clapped into prison, and there they were obliged to stop until they had translated their textbooks into Arabic. Then some of them were released, but the majority were turned into schoolmasters. Awful degradation to an Oriental, you know.

"Well, this chap, this Abbas—he has a jolly lot of names and titles, but we call him simply Count Abbas—was of the famous three hundred. He somehow got wind of the scheme, and very sensibly failed to return with the others. So he's a Parisian, now, and upon my word he isn't a bad one. He's immensely rich, as clever as Lucifer, and no end popular at the clubs. May I present him? He might interest you."

"I wish Mehemet Ali were here!" cried Lady Florence. "I should adore him. But in his default I think the count may do."

Capt. Arbuthnot took his leave, well pleased to have been a little useful to his fair kinswoman. He hoped, some day, when he should inherit his title, to become indispensable to her.

He was not the only man who aspired to so much distinction, for Lady Florence Brooke was a very beautiful woman. She was also very brilliant, a combination not frequently encountered. In conclusion, she was selfish, which is commoner.

It ought to be said, in her behalf, that every formative influence, every detail of her education, had been such as to cultivate selfishness in even less promising soil. From childhood she had been encouraged to believe herself infinitely above others of her sex, both in beauty and intellect. Flattered, deferred to, consulted and confided in by her father and his friends, she had early attained an elevation of self-esteem which was far too lofty to be styled mere vanity.

After his first disappointment that he had a daughter instead of a son, her father resolved to make the motherless girl what he conceived to be a perfect woman.
In his own opinion—and in hers—he had been completely successful. She knew mathematics like a Senior Wrangler, Latin like a cardinal, and her beautiful lips rolled honeyed Greek like a reincarnated Helen.

By the time she entered society she was quite satisfied that she was superior, by virtue of personality, to any and all rank.

She was now six-and-twenty, and unmarried, despite offers.

"The thing is simply this, Papa," explained the young woman, "I intend to become a model for wives as soon as the man appears whom I thoroughly respect, and who never bores me. As yet I have not found the two qualifications embodied in one individual."

Haply this was repeated to Capt. Arbuthnot. At all events the day after he had presented Count Abbas, the Egyptian approached him and said: "My dear Arbuthnot, if you will tell me how to please your houri of a cousin, I promise to smuggle you into the paradise of true believers, hereafter!"

"Why, my dear chap," answered the attaché seriously, "nothing is easier. In the first place you must amuse her! And if you can't do that, impress her! If you should succeed in doing both—well, in that case you would certainly prove yourself an all-around man."

Count Abbas did not, at first, succeed in doing either. Lady Florence was disappointed to find him so little out of the common. His complexion was no swarthier than many a Frenchman's, although his hair and beard were of a peculiar blue-black seldom seen in Europe, and he had the soft, dull eyes of an Oriental. For the rest, he was a fair type of the ordinary young Parisian dandy of the day.

Occasionally there crept into his speech an accent, a figure, an allusion, an evasive essence, that was distinctly alien, and he soon, divining that these subtle differences were pleasing to her, began to affect them. After that she was more gracious, and before long a certain intimacy was established between them. She allowed him to say to her—in his Oriental fashion—things which from others would have been coldly received. She was not above a flirtation, but love-making offended her taste.

This woman, with the brain of a man, possessed the rudimentary emotional nature of a child. She had, in place of affections, pas-
sions, instincts, merely a devouring curiosity, a love of change, a desire for sensation.

Because he fed this restless flame Count Abbas charmed her. The intensity of his feeling for her, if she noticed it at all, caused her no concern. She did not wish to inflict suffering, but no impulse to prevent it had ever entered her mind.

Lady Florence's favorite jewels were rubies, and of these the count had some rarely beautiful specimens. When she spoke one day of the enduring nature of such gems he answered with a strange smile:

"My rubies are older than I, to be sure, but they will not necessarily endure longer."

She laughed delightedly. "So you have the elixir of life!"

"I did not say so. Truly, I am no seer. But I have a certain unique advantage over other men. I know the exact spot on earth where my death must occur! Of course I shall never visit that place as long as I desire to live. It follows that I am immortal, if I choose to be."

"And how, pray, did you come into this valuable intelligence?"

"It is an inheritance. I had it from my father's lips, as he had it in secret from his father, whose father confided it to him."

"And yet — they died!"

"Yes, they died. But I need not die. Will you condescend to hear the tale?"

"Continue."

The young man leaned far back into the red cushions of his chair, and as he did so, a beam of the late afternoon sun caught the rubies in his hand, quickening them into flame. His gaze rested on them in silence, and a sudden melancholy came into his handsome, sallow face. His eyes glowed dully, like banked fires. At this moment he was not in the least Parisian. Lady Florence regarded him with admiration, as she would have admired a rare vase, or a marble, or an edition — anything perfect of its kind. As the sunbeam passed, his melancholy also passed, and he spoke in his ordinary light-hearted tone.

"The story reflects such small credit on one of my ancestors that family pride ought to prevent my telling it. But what is the
sin of ingratitude weighed against the infinite happiness of furnishing you entertainment? Know then, O my lady, that when your slave's great-grandfather was little more than a stripling, he was sent on an important mission to the city of Damascus. Having arrived, he was hastening to the house of the dignitary to whom his letters were addressed, when he was abruptly halted by a great crowd of people, which completely filled the narrow street. It may have been a fire, or a religious riot; at all events, there was so much excitement that my great-grand sire wasted no time in taking refuge in a narrow alley between two tall houses hard by.

"Three other persons had preceded them thither; two women seated on asses, attended by an immense black eunuch. One of the women was old, evidently a duenna. The other my impressionable ancestor easily surmised to be young and beautiful. Both of them were frightened out of their senses. It was obviously the part of a brave young man to reassure them. The blockade lasted a long time. What would you have? The end of it all — or the beginning of it all, rather — was a visit the next day from the old woman, an appointment, a disguise, a meeting! Indeed lady, these things happen in the East as frequently as in the West.

"The fair one proved to be the daughter of a Jewish merchant. She was motherless, and somewhat neglected. Tradition preserves that she was, as it were, a willow wand for grace and elegance, and her face was as the moon when it rises on the fourteenth night. At the first dropping of her veil my ancestor's wit was confounded and his reason was unsettled. They conversed together, timidly at first, afterwards with boldness.

"In that country women are not coquettes. They are children in mind and heart, and their passions are as the winds of the desert. Thus Zulma Rebya awoke to love as from a deep sleep.

"I will not attempt to give you the details of the affair. In the first place, I do not know them — I only know that the end came very suddenly. My great-grand sire received a summons from home, and was obliged to go with hardly an adieu. In the East no man marries without his parents' consent, and even if he had wished to wed his Jewish lady-love it would never have been
permit. So he left Damascus alone. The damsel was, as usual, unreasonable. What says your poet? 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'

"As my great-grandsire set forth on his journey he was obliged to pass the spot where he had seen her first, and behold, the old woman was waiting for him with a letter in her hand. As he took the writing a chill like that of the tomb came over him. And no wonder! For it contained no tender farewell, but a terrible and a prophetic curse.

"'Thou goest out from the gates of the city where thou didst promise to abide until death found thee within. That promise shalt thou still keep. Here shalt thou die, and never shalt thou die save only here. Thou and thy son and thy son's sons, as long as they have sons. By the virtue of my mother.'

"My ancestor journeyed on and in due season came to his own country, where he lived and completed his manhood and married wives after the custom of our holy religion. Zulma Rebya became as a shadow and her bitter words were, in time, almost forgotten. Almost, but not completely; for when, twenty-five years later, affairs involving a large inheritance made it imperative for one of the family to go to Damascus, my great-grandfather refused to part with his sons. He did not believe very strongly in curses, but if there was a risk he preferred to take it on himself.

"His business was soon accomplished, and in twenty-four hours he was ready to leave the fateful city. But leave he never did, for the cholera was abroad, and he perished in agony, and his ashes were scattered to the winds.

"His eldest son, my grandfather, rose to distinction in the service of the Sultan, who thought so highly of him that he was often entrusted with delicate matters of diplomacy in foreign lands. It was finally decreed that one of the embassies involved certain negotiation with a great Sheik of the Bedawin, whose desert home was near the city of our destiny. Whether or not my grandfather hesitated to go I cannot say, but it is probable that he accepted his mission as a soldier his post at the enemy's front; a duty to be done, even to the death.

"The conference with the Bedawi lasted several days, nearly a week, and resulted to the Sultan's advantage. But other lips than
the ambassador's brought back the tidings. Himself was killed in
a street brawl at the very gates of the city.

"When my father, then nearly twenty-one, heard of his father's
murder in Damascus, the curse of Zulma Rebya fell heavy on his
soul. He was a gloomy man — I think I never heard his laughter
—but he was a brave man as well, and his life was as active and
as useful as though no dead woman's hand pointed him to a shame-
ful doom. He was Mehemet Ali's nearest friend, and when that
great man conquered Egypt, he made my father a marshal of his
army.

"In 1830, as you have heard, I was sent with other youths, to
Europe; but, unlike the others, I did not return. My father,
friend of Mehemet, still had no desire to see his own son made
into a pedagogue by the tyrant, and I was warned in time. If I
had been at home — " he paused, and a touch of genuine emotion
broke his voice.

"What then?" cried Lady Florence, with impatience.

"If I had been at home my father should not have gone."

"He went!"

"Second in command to Ibrahim, whose army captured Damas-
cus in '34. Many perished in that bloody struggle, and among
the first — my father."

Lady Florence was as pale as death.

"And do you really believe in it?" she asked breathlessly.

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

She, recovering herself, began to laugh. "Tell me, then, my
dear Count, how long do you intend to live? If I remember, none
of your few fellow-immortals found an unending existence an actual
boon. At what age will you elect that famous journey to
Damascus?"

"Ah, Lady Florence," answered the Oriental, rising and coming
quickly to her. "A short time since I fancied that I should never
go, but now I know that I desire to live only as long as you do.
And I shall start to-morrow unless you tell me that I may spend
every day of the future near to you — nearer than any other, man
or woman."

She stood up in amazement, and motioned him back with an
authoritative hand.
"Oh do not reply at once," he cried passionately. "O Moon of Paradise, listen a moment longer! You are used to be worshipped, but not by a man of my race. You have heard words of love, but not in the golden language which I shall teach you. If I am your husband, you will say that in Europe men do not know how to love at all: You will declare that no other woman in the world is a wife."

In spite of herself, Lady Florence was shaken by his stormy ardor. Her cold breast even caught a faint reflective glow. She sank into her chair trembling, and he fell down beside her, possessing her hands with his lips.

"My princess! You will? You will?"

"But you —" she stammered. "A Turk — a Mohammedan —"

"I am not a Turk, I am not a Mohammedan. I have no country, no religion, if any on the earth offend you. Your nation is mine, and the room that holds you is the mosque where I will go to prayer, for the rest of our days."

"My father will never consent."

Why was it impossible for her to dismiss the man outright?

"I have already satisfied your father that I am a suitable alliance. He leaves you perfectly free to accept me if you choose."

"I do not wish to marry yet."

"Ah, but when you do! It is all I ask, that you consent to marry me when you are ready."

"But, good heavens! I am not even ready to do that," she cried desperately.

"At least you do not reject me. By Allah, I will not go to Damascus yet!"

And every day afterwards when he left her, he murmured over her hand: "O my lady, do I journey to Damascus to-morrow?"

And every day the question was asked more ardently, more confidently, for she was never quite able to say "go!"

She had not the remotest intention of accepting him. He did not fulfil the first condition which she had assured her father was necessary to her choice, and she foresaw that, as her lover, he would soon cease to devote himself to merely amusing her.

Then why did she not dismiss him? Not because she feared to cause his death. Lady Florence was not superstitious. The
plain truth is that he overbore her with his personality; he was so near to being her master that she was afraid of him.

The situation soon became intolerable. She, hitherto so proud, so insolent in her strength of mind, stooped now to weakly pondering schemes for getting rid of him, and she believed she had hit upon that which would compel him to abandon his suit. She knew that, in the Oriental character, superstition, dread of curses, belief in the evil eye, is so ingrained as to be structural. She resolved to make this fact her weapon.

Listening one afternoon to his fervid eloquence, she said softly, "I beg of you a little time for reflection. All the world is on its way to Rome for the Carnival. Go you too, and the very hour when you return you shall have your answer."

He drew a long breath, his black eyes devouring her passionately. Then he bowed to the ground, whispered "I hear and obey," and was gone.

The answer was handed Count Abbas two weeks later, to the day. Its first effect was to transform him in appearance into a maniac. Locked in his chamber, he rushed blindly up and down until, utterly exhausted, he fell on the divan, clenched his hands above his head, and sobbed like a hurt animal. At length, his rage spent, he sat up very pale and calm.

"One of them lived a week," he muttered. "If I live a week, I shall have time for love, and for revenge also. If I live only a day, as the first one did—or a few hours, or one hour—she is not worth it, but my desire for her is worth it. Perhaps I will strangle her at the end. I ought to do it."

He opened the door and said to his Egyptian servant: "Ismail, put things together for a sea voyage."

On the flat roof of the British consulate in Damascus Lady Florence sat, peacefully enjoying the divine love story of the nightingale. She was thinking of the European letters, due probably on the morrow. Her father's would be furious, but she could always pacify him. If Abbas wrote at all, his letter would be unpleasant, but then—she was not obliged to read it. When she returned to Paris, she felt confident, the count would be abroad. She listened for another hour to the nightingale, chatted
with the consul and his wife, a cousin of her mother, and went down to her placid pillow.

The foreign post arrived the next day and so did Count Abbas.

The interview between them was very brief. In the cold pallor, the averted eye, the wordless greeting of the woman who entered the room to receive him, he read the truth before anything was spoken.

"I did not intend this," she said. "I did not dream that it would happen. You would not let me refuse you, and I believed that I could elude you by coming here. It was a stupid plan, and I think very badly of myself. I hope you will forgive me, some day."

She waited for him to speak, and his lips moved, but no syllable escaped them. He looked at her with a hollow stare. His hat fell noisily to the floor; he picked it up, brushed it mechanically, and resumed his expressionless gaze.

Again she broke the painful silence:

"I am sorry to hurt you. I did not intend to do so."

With an effort, he answered in a broken whisper: "Not your fault — the other one."

He turned and felt his way through the door into the street, where Ismail was waiting. Later, they sought a barren lodging, which was to be their abiding place till the end should come. Abbas did not notice the poverty of the place. It was good enough to die in, and from out its portals he never went — alive.

And did death find him?
Verily, no man escapes his fate.
And with what weapon was the blow dealt?
With that which is often reserved for the least worthy among men — old age.
He died at eighty-three — some years after Lady Florence Arbuthnot.
To Save a Stainless Name.*

BY CATHARINE YOUNG GLEN.

Among the older residents of Tarrytown, N. Y., there are doubtless some who can still point out with interest the large, old-fashioned house, with pleasant walks and cool tree-arches, once the home of the Wall Street broker, J. H. Ihlefield. Mr. Ihlefield's household was composed at that time—thirty years ago—of himself and wife, and a niece and nephew, twenty and twenty-one years of age, respectively, the children of his less fortunate brother, A. V. Ihlefield, then many years dead. Though the uncle had discharged wisely and faithfully the duties of a parent towards the orphans, the nephew—"Harry" as he was called—had disappointed his expectations, and instead of showing a disposition to settle down into a man of affairs, seemed to regard all forms of business with aversion. The niece, Margaret, on the other hand, was not only a girl of unusual beauty and spirit, but of business aptitude as well.

During the month of August, 1867, Mr. and Mrs. Ihlefield and Miss Margaret were visiting at Saratoga Springs—having closed the house at Tarrytown—but the wild Harry declined to accompany them, declaring that Saratoga was too hot and dull, and that he should go yachting with friends.

The family had been but a short time at Saratoga when a matter of business arose which made it necessary for some one of the family to return to Tarrytown at once for its adjustment. At this juncture Mrs. Ihlefield, never strong, was taken suddenly and quite seriously ill. As it was thought unadvisable for her husband to be absent, Miss Margaret herself undertook the errand, leaving Saratoga by an early train.

"The papers will be signed by half-past four," she said to her uncle, at parting, bidding him affectionate farewell, "and by five

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you may think of me as with the Wests." The Wests, with whom she intended to spend the night in Tarrytown, were near neighbors and friends.

The day was close and dusty, the journey tiresome. The accomplishment of her business proved a lengthier matter than Miss Margaret had thought. Certain details of it she was obliged, even then, to leave over until the following morning. It was not, therefore, until after six that she presented herself, a graceful but weary figure, at the door of her friends, the Wests. She was met there with disappointment and perplexity. The house was closed. They had gone, as she afterward learned, a week sooner than intended. The only other friend upon whose hospitality she would have cared, at this hour, unannounced and travel-stained, to intrude, was likewise out of town.

She was averse to going to a hotel. Owing to the nature of her errand, and purposing so early a return, she did not wish her presence generally known. She turned again slowly into the street, and for a moment stood irresolute.

Her own deserted home, half a block beyond, gleamed white through the veil of green, its windows catching the last faint rays of sun. A vision of comfort rose before her, enchanting to her tired soul — her own delightful room — and an impulse, growing into sudden, daring determination, gained possession of the girl. She felt for the latch-key in her bosom, and a few moments later was fitting it to the lock.

"No one will be the wiser!" she exulted, with a laugh and a little natural shiver, as she stepped into the silent hall. She was correct. So quietly did she move about, so carefully did she shield her light, that neither the officer who at intervals patrolled the avenue, nor the watchman whose duty it was to make a round of the grounds between the hours of ten and twelve received a hint of her presence.

After a hasty tour of the house, to convince herself that she was really alone — a trial, even to a spirit so courageous — she went at once to her own bedroom, and remained there through the evening, with her thoughts and her books.

This room, furnished with every luxury, had large front windows on the west, looking out upon the avenue; opposite, at the eastern
end, a door opened into a dressing-room, which in its turn com-
municated with the hall. On the south, and facing the great
Louis XIV. bed, which stood against the northern wall, was a
pentagonal alcove, formed by a bay window. In the broad space
between its windows stood a dresser, and an archway, richly cur-
tained, half divided it from the room.

It was some time past twelve before Miss Margaret decided to
retire. Placing her watch, together with the costly rings she
always wore, in a little jewel-box, she shut it away in the drawer
of a table between the avenue windows, and removed the key.
This she put beneath her pillow.

Her preparations for the night concluded, she extinguished her
light, and, folding back the screening blinds, lingered a moment
at the open window in the alcove. The moon, now full, had
turned the Ihlefield grounds into one great checkerboard, lying in
vivid squares of light and shadow. It seemed to Margaret that
she had never witnessed a more beautiful scene, nor known a
silence so profound. The vines about the trellis, moon-enthralled,
seemed made of trailing stone. She herself, standing in that
splendor, in one of those dreams of billowy whiteness with which
women of her position and wealth are wont to robe themselves
for night, would have defied the cunning of the sculptor.

Every trace of fear, the result of her unusual situation, melted
away before that majesty of repose. Leaving the alcove windows
so that the full tide might pour into the bedroom, she calmly laid
her head upon the pillow, and almost immediately slept.

She was to be rudely awakened.

About half-past two — though she had then no notion of time —
she came to herself with a sudden and peculiar sense of danger,
that something which rouses us, as at the touch of a cold hand,
from the numbness of deep sleep into more than two-fold conscious-
ness. Instinct then compels us to be still, every nerve strained,
every faculty alert. By not so much as the moving of a finger did
Margaret betray herself as she opened her eyes.

The room was still in a silvery glow, yet not as she had left it! She
felt her heart to stop within her — then to beat with choking,
suffocating violence. The sensation was unendurable. She sat
upright, gasping, as for breath.
With the same motion the figure she saw in the alcove turned. A nickelled revolver, instantly levelled, sent its gleam across her face. There was an interval of absolute suspense. Every minutest detail of the tableau before her stamped itself upon her eyes. The man was tall and stalwart, the lower half of his face clean-shaven, the upper hidden by a burglar’s mask. He spoke, still covering her. His voice was distinctly audible, yet so low that she seemed to feel, rather than to hear it.

“Make no alarm! Keep perfectly quiet! I mean you no harm if you will do so!” Then, as she neither stirred nor spoke — “Do you give me your word?”

She had no recollection of what she said. She supposed that she must have answered as he desired.

“Very well, then,” the muffled voice continued, “I am going on with my work.” Regarding her steadily, as though to assure himself, he lowered the weapon. “Remember! I shall hear you if you make the slightest sound!”

Sitting motionless, she could watch his every move. He began a rapid searching of the dresser. Drawer after drawer was turning out its contents, under his still, deft hand.

Her whirling thoughts took shape, revolved about one central, towering idea. She was alone! Alone in an empty house, amid a wilderness of shrubbery, on a deserted block, in the awful silence of night! At all cost, at all hazard, she must conceal the fact from this man, who evidently from his fear that she would give an alarm did not know it. Let him but pass beyond her door, and he would find it out! She reasoned that he had come by her alcove window, which she had left open. If by that window he could be induced to go, without looking farther! If she could only satisfy him with what she had!

With an effort she leaned forward. The figure was bending over the last drawer of the dresser. She spoke rapidly, hardly above a whisper, hearing her own words as though some one else were talking.

“One moment! Will you listen?” He was silent, but from her first syllable showed attention. “Your staying here is dangerous to you, and misery to me! You must not disturb the other rooms! If I make it worth your while will you go? Will you go at once?”
She waited, but he did not answer.
She dared again. Her breath was coming short and fast.
"If I make it worth your while?"
The dark man regarded her furtively. He was evidently un-

"What is it of value that you have?" he said.
She quivered, with the hope of winning.
"I have money and jewels! They will more than pay you! Will you let me rise, that I may show you? Oh, will you promise me that you will go?"

He stood, a tall, straight shadow, between the alcove curtains. Through the black blot upon his face she could feel him search her soul.
"I believe you are speaking the truth!" he said, at last. His voice was cool and deliberate. "Let me have them, and I will leave you!"

She threw a long, light cloak, lying by the bed, about her shoulders. "Stay where you are!" she commanded. "I shall not try to pass you!"

She took the little case from its hiding in the table drawer. As she stood, the deep baying of a dog came up to her, from far down the avenue. Something in that sound, so gruesome in the dead of night, doubled the horror of her loneliness with that un-

known man. She wavered, battling with herself. Every element in her past had its influence in that short, decisive fight with fear.

She took a step toward him, and stopped, with eyes dilated. Then, all the pride of her family in her white-robed figure, she deliberately crossed the belt of moonlight to his side. Her face was pale and resolute, her head thrown back, her rich hair falling about her in a shimmering cloud. The jewels flashed within her hands. Never, perhaps, had that masked man beheld so radiant an apparition.

He started, and stepped backward, but his gaze falling on the stones, he uttered an exclamation of deep, unfeigned delight.

Still holding them, for he made no move to take them, she motioned to the window just behind him.

"I have kept my word!" she said, with simple dignity. "I believe that you will now keep yours!"
Taking the case she extended, he placed it inside his coat, with
a peculiar courtesy in the action, foreign to his kind. He turned,
as though to obey her, then, hesitating, turned to her again.
Something—it might have been a “thank you,” it might have
been some whimsical apology for the discourtesy Fate had thus
driven him to offer her—parted the thin lips. What he would have
said she never knew! In the next breath they were set, repelling,
drawn across the teeth.

Through the open dressing-room, leading to the hall, had come
a sound which transfixed them both. There was no mistake!
The knob of the door below, at the foot of the stairs, had turned!
For an instant they faced each other, listening! The dark
man’s thought was written in his pose—it was that of the animal
at bay! He was in danger! The house was awake!

But Margaret, in a flash, surmised the truth. Braving that
housebreaker, nerved to her desperate ordeal, she realized that
before which her courage melted down like snow. Her predic-
ament—the strangest, maddest whim of chance—has never yet
been paralleled, it is likely never will be! The house had been
entered again—from below!

There was even then a creeping step upon the stair!

Escape was easy for the burglar. The jewels were safe in his
bosom, he had all and more than he came to find! With a silent
oath he sprang for the window—but the girl beside him was
quicker than he!

Scarce knowing what she did, she flung herself upon him and
held him by the arms. Her slender hands were like bands of
steel; her eyes, dark with terror, were upraised to his.

She poured forth the secret, which she had given all to guard.
Her blanched face was its guarantee of truth.

“You cannot go! You cannot leave me! I am alone!”

He struggled to free himself, to force her away, but she clung
to him with the wild abandon of a child. She cried out to him,
in sobbing whispers, in agonized entreaty:

“Stay with me! Help me! Help me! I am all alone!”

As they heard the sound again her arms closed upon him.

“Oh, for the love of God!”

The eyes behind the mask burned down upon her. The thought
at that moment behind the eyes only God knew! With a gentle-
ness, the memory of which she carried to the grave, the man sud-
denly forced her backward into the alcove and drew the curtain
so that it concealed them both.

“Let go!” he commanded, in the same low tone. “My right
hand must be free!”

She did as she was bidden, standing on the left. Together
there, hidden, yet with every other object in the room in bright
relief, they waited, listening to that coming, coming tap, tap, tap!

Was it eternal? Would it never end?

Margaret’s eyes were riveted upon the line where the light in
the bedroom lost itself in the shadow of the dressing-room beyond.
It seemed to her that if anything should disturb that shadow,
move within it, she must shriek aloud. Vivid, swiftly-changing
pictures began to pass and re-pass before her — every scene since
her parting with her friends, every unimportant detail of the day
just gone — only that betwixt her and that familiar yesterday a
timeless gulf now seemed to stretch. She was no more of it than
if it were a dream!

The step upon the stair had ceased. There was perfect quiet,
broken only by the loud, hard beating of her heart. This stillness
was awful; it was worse than the sound. She could not turn her
head, yet she could half see the figure at her side. She caught the
shifting gleam from something on his right.

Again there was movement! Somewhere there in that uncer-
tain darkness of the dressing-room.

She began to hear the swish and swirl of waters rising about
her, and to see the dancing of waves. Something called her back
—it was the dark man’s hand on her wrist. That touch, reviving,
reassuring her, transfusing its iron through her blood! She could
look again, seeing as through a blur.

They were not alone in the bedroom. She knew, in spite of the
mist that came and went, that some indistinct thing was not far
from them, and was drawing toward the curtain. It was looking
for the dresser. The dresser was behind them!

The pressure on her arm tightened. “Steady, steady!” it warned
her. “Soft, now, soft!” She could feel the tension of the sinewy
frame. She closed her eyes, drawing her own strength from it.
They could have touched the man on the other side of the curtain; they could hear him breathe. The fabric trembled between them. Then the groping hand from without laid hold upon it.

There was a motion in the figure beside her, and a loud, involuntary shriek — her own! Then came a crash, and a blinding trail of fire, and another instant crash and blaze in return. The masked man sprang forward, the other man sprang upon him. They fired and fired again. One fell and dragged the other! They locked and rolled, in a tiger-grip, upon the floor. They writhed and panted, in their death-embrace. There was no word, no cry.

Clinging to the curtain over them, Margaret felt the waters rise again! Through the closing darkness she was sensible of a single sound — the thudding of a club on the stones without — an officer, calling help.

Help! Help! But they would be too late for the human tigers at her feet! Her hold on the curtain weakened. She swayed, and fell beside them.

It seemed but a moment before she came to herself, yet she was conscious that in some way all had changed. She stretched her arms — they touched soft pillows. She was lying on her bed.

She sat up. The room was very still. She passed her hand across her eyes. A strange thing had come with her awaking — she was no longer afraid! Creeping up, she slipped from off the bed, and stole out toward the alcove. One dark figure lay there, blotting out the moonlight, his arm thrown heavily across his face. The girl bent over, breathless, looking. A sudden wave of anguish shook her! Which of the two? Was it he who saved her?

She knelt beside the dead man, fiercely, and dragged away his arm.

There was a jam and crash, below stairs, as though a door had given way, a confusion of unfamiliar sounds. There was a hurried, shuffling noise of feet, and whispering voices. A round red light shot along the upper wall. But she did not heed it. She noticed nothing. She took the heavy head upon her lap, and pressed her hands against the clotted hair. So the police found her, staring down upon it, sitting like a stone. It was not the face she had feared to find! *The dead man was her brother!*
There was a shout below, from without, and one of the officers who had come in rushed back, thinking it a cry for help. She did not hear it! Afterwards she knew that they had found another man, down where the grounds joined the road, unconscious, dying of his wounds — and with her jewels on his breast.

Margaret Ihlefield told her own story. Neither of the silent witnesses has gainsaid her, and the opinion of the world will not disturb her now.

She alone has known what that awful night first revealed and later research laid bare to her; — her brother, a criminal at twenty-one, through bad company and secret debt, had returned to rob his benefactor and foster-father, and had died, red-handed, in his act.

Who shall judge her? What was there left for her to do? Should she blacken his poor dead name, and drag down her family pride? It was easy to account for his being in town on that ill-fated day, and she did so, and said they had been together in the house. The testimony of the officers, the dead thief with the costly proofs upon him — these were her corroborations. To this hour Harry Ihlefield has been a hero, who gave up his life to defend his sister and his uncle’s house, and sleeps beneath a glorious marble shaft, but Margaret was never able to look upon it!

After all, the other man has had his reward! Fainting on that night, and waking to find herself upon her bed, she knew that, wounded to death, he had carried her to that place of safety, his life-blood staining her garments, and his features, as she saw them beneath his mask, always lingered in her memory — the clean-shaven face, with its thin lips and inscrutable eyes!

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Have you Dandruff?.........................................................
Is your hair falling out?.................................................
How often do you wash it?..............................................
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Any scaly eruptions?....................................................... Had any serious sickness lately?.........................
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It tells of my success in the proper employment of the galvanic current of electricity and how I discovered 25 years ago that an appliance was required which would give a continuous, mild current for seven or eight hours at a time. This led me to construct a portable chain battery which the patient might apply himself, and started me in on a line of experiment which has led by degrees, by 25 years of close practical study and application into the construction of my present.

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Under the latter category are included True Rupture, or Breach, False Rupture or Varicocele, Prostatic and all diseases which interfere with nature's normal processes.

These diseases impede the circulation, impair nutrition, induce grave nervous and mental weaknesses varying in degree from slight nervous debility to complete Paralysis. Varicocele (or Varix) is a relaxed condition of veins in which the blood becoming stagnant and clotted, impedes and poisons the circulation.

The toxic clots are carried into the general circulation, causing Paralysis in some form. If deposited in the arteries which supply the brain, Paresis, Hemiplegia and other incapacitating diseases result. Locomotor-Ataxia, Paraplegia, Monoplegia, etc., are caused by deposits that affect the spinal cord.

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Ataxia pains are instantaneously and permanently relieved.

I accomplish the cure of these diseases without internal remedies, leaving the alimentary canal undisturbed, that it may assimilate the nerve food and liberal hygienic diet with which I provide my patients. I cure to stay cured.

I have no remedies or appliances to ship. My personal professional services and the administering of my Electro-Chemic treatment by myself is required to accomplish a cure of diseases to which I limit my practice.

The Richardson Home which I maintain for the accommodation of patients is equipped with every modern convenience and adjunct for the care of those under my charge and for their comfort. A prompt response will reach those who write a full history of their case. Enclose ten cents to prepay postage on sealed book which I have written and illustrated from photographs of cases covering every condition of the foregoing diseases.

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2 Prizes $500 each—$1,000
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CONDITIONS:

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full, as also the number of words it contains, which may range from 1,300 to 6,000, but must in no case exceed the latter number.
2. Each manuscript must be plainly written (either on typewriter or with pen) on one side of paper only, on sheets not larger than 8 x 11 inches, must be sent unrolled, postage or express charges fully prepaid, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return. Letters advising the submission of stories must be enclosed with manuscripts and must not exceed one page in length only. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at the writer's risk.
3. Every story must be strictly original and must, neither wholly nor in part, have appeared in print in any language. Every story will be judged on its own merits: the name or reputation of a writer will carry absolutely no weight whatsoever. And furthermore, every story will be judged, not in accordance with its length, but with its worth as a story.
4. With every manuscript intended for this $4,200 Prize Competition, there must be enclosed, in one and the same envelope, a yearly subscription to The Black Cat, together with 20 cents to pay therefor. In case of subscriptions to foreign countries 45 cents must be added to cover postage.
5. All envelopes containing manuscripts with subscriptions as above must be plainly marked "For Competition" and addressed to The Short Story Publishing Company, 16 High Street, Boston, Mass. Their receipt will be promptly acknowledged. Any competitor may send as many stories as he pleases, but in each case all the above conditions must be complied with.
6. The competition will close March 31, 1900, and within 60 days from that date the awards will be announced in The Black Cat, and paid in cash. Should two stories of equal merit be considered worthy of a prize, the prize will be either doubled or divided. In the case of stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, the publishers will either award special prizes, of not less than $100 each, or will offer to purchase the same. All unsuccessful manuscripts, submitted as above, will be returned, together with the printed announcement of the results of the competition. The conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, neither the publisher nor the editor can enter into any correspondence relative thereto.

IMPORTANT. As no manuscripts in the case of which all the above conditions have not been complied with will be considered, it is urged that competitors make sure that their manuscripts are prepared strictly in accordance with the foregoing, are securely sealed in strong envelopes, with the necessary enclosures, and sent fully prepaid.

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