

"Not even if it is addressed to her."
The servant was about to withdraw.

"Hereafter I shall give you \$10 a month

extra. This will be for taking care of the mail. Do you understand?"

Jane signified that she understood. Indeed

the comprehended perfectly. She knew very

well that if any letter were suffered to pass through from the postman direct to Miss Kitty, her extra allowance as mail superin-

tendent would cease, and that she would get

It was about six weeks after all this hap-

pened that Mr. Tom Horton entered the

office where he was employed, at \$75 a

black enough for a storm-perched himself

Tom got down off his stool, changed his

coat, and went to the president's private

office.
"Mr. Horton," said the president, "the

superintendent of the state insurance depart-

ment will come next week to examine into

our condition. I want you to figure the re

prised at being called on for this duty.

"All right, sir," said Tom, somewhat sur-

"And, Mr. Horton," the official went on,

Tom was astonished. "I can't figure it any

other than the true way, Mr. Lester," he

said, flushing up.
"Mr. Horton," the president went on in

an insidious tone, "there is a great deal of lati-

tude in these figures; no one really knows

what they are. They are all assumed."
Tom said nothing. The president was sitting sidewise at his deak, tapping on it lightly

"How would you like to be assistant secre-

tary, Mr Horton, with a salary of \$5,000 a

year! I am considering the propriety of of-

"Not at such a price," said Tom. His eyes were big as saucers. All this was a frightful revelation to him. He saw only a man more

than double his age tempting him. "I will

make ne figures that are not correct," he

"Don't you think you are a trifle squeam-

"Very well, sir," said the president quietly.

Tom did go back to his desk-not to write,

but to lay his head on it with a crushed sen-sation about his heart. He did not doubt for a moment that his discharge would soon fol-

low. Of course there would be some pretext,

but the discharge was sure to come. Then

he thought of the assistant secretaryship and

the \$5,000 a year and Kitty, and got up and

took his hat and went out into the fresh air.

It didn't seem possible for him to return to the office. Indeed, he remained away till the afternoon. When he went to his desk he

found an order to go to the president's office.

Tom felt no more doubt as to what he was

He proceeded up the three or four steps which

led to Mr. Lester's room and stood again in

the presence of the official who held his des-

"Mr. Horton," the president began in a matter of fact, business like tone, "this being

the last of December, we are arranging our

"In fact we are to have a complete reor-ganization." Mr. Lester stopped and looked

over a paper on which there was a long list

"And Mr. Minks is to be secretary in Mr.

"There is to be a new assistant secretary appointed to take charge of all the securities."
"Just so," said Tom, by this time scarcely

knowing what he was saying. He wished

his discharge would be spoken and over with.

A boy entered with a telegram. Mr. Les-ter read it and studied over it. Meanwhile

he seemed to have forgotten that he was not

"Ah!" he said, suddenly, "where was I

Oh, yes, I remember."
"Mr. Horton, you are doubtless a very

Tom did not reply. He saw no necessity

Still Tom had nothing to say. He stared at

Tem began to open his eyes.
"We want some one whom we can trust to
take care of our \$3,000,000 of securities. Mr.

Warren recommended you, but the trust is too great to bestow on any one without at

for taunts because he would not be dishonest

clerks, as we have more than we need." It was coming out as Tom had expected.

of names. Tom's heart stopped, too.

"We are going to discharge several of the

force for the coming year.

Tom shuddered.

how it concerned him.

Warren's place?" 'Yes, sir."

honest young man.'

"But a very stupid one."

called there for than of his own existen

"No, sir." Tom began to get angry.

'You may go back to your desk."

with the farcers of his right hand

fering you that position."

"And you decline?"

"I do, most assuredly."

added, firmly.

ish "

looking at Tom knowingly, "it is necessary that it should be so figured as to show no im-

Jane," called the mistress.

Jane paused.

ber discharge besides,

insurance office.

Insurance fund."

pairment of our capital."





furnished drawing room. In one hand he held a hat-a hat which looked all the more shabby from contrast with the rich curtain against which it brushed. In the other he held the round. white hand of a girl who was looking into his

eyes. There were two pairs of eyes peer-ing straight into each other. The girl was speaking.
"Mamma says—that"——. Her voice trem-

"Well, what does she say?" "She says that you mustn't—you mustn't ome"— There was more faltering.

"That I mustn't come here any more!"

"Well, your mother is right in this; at least for the present. What else does she say?" "That I'm not to— O, I can't do it."

"Well, go on." "I'm not to correspond with you or hear from you, ever, ever, ever." The last three words were spoken in despair, with a

ndo intonation. "Right again. Now, Kitty, I understand your mother's purpose well. It is to marry you to a rich man. She wishes your fortune

to be added to fortune." "But I haven't any fortune." "Your mother has a very large one."
"Then why can't she let us be happy?" and
e dashed away a tenr—a tear of mingled

sappointment and vexation.
"Kitty!" called a cold, imperious woman's

voice in an adjoining room. "Yes, manima, in a minute." "Good-by" he said. "We must do as she ishes; at least now. If I could take you I

would, but I can't and the prospect isn't hope ful. Better forget me, Kitty." "I will not!" cried the girl passionately.

She put both her arms about him and held

"Kitty," he said, disengaging himself and looking her square in the face with a pair of honest eyes, "if the day ever comes when I can take care of you on a small income, will you leave her"-pointing to the adjoining room-"and come to me!

"Then you shall hear from me; not through her, but direct." She won't let me have your letter."

"Pil find a way to reach you."
"Catherine!" called the voice in the other

room, more imperious than before.

He moved into the hall. The girl followed m. He caught her in his arms again and held her for a few moments, during which it ed to the mother in the adjoining room that the clock on the parlor mantel was ticking very loud. Then he was gone, Kitty flew back into the drawing room and to the window. The look he gave her as he turned

his head for the last time was very sad and very earnest, but it was a resolute look. "I can't-I can't bear it," she said to herself mournfully, as he disappeared from her sight.

"Kitty," called the mother again, this time in a more kindly tone. The daughter entered the sitting room and stood in the presence of her mother. She was the picture of unhappiness. Her form was too young, her cheek too round, her brow too smooth to present such a picture. She was barely 18, and this was the first trouble she had ever known. Mrs. Cloverlie was sitting in a high backed chair of antique pattern. She was knitting. There was a rigid look on her face, a square-ness about her mouth that indicated a strong

Kitty," she said, "when you come to be my age you will thank me for this." 'Perhaps so, mamma." She was summon ing all her own will power to keep from

bursting into tears. "You told Mr. Horton all I directed you to tell him?" asked the mother, still plying her

fingers on her knitting. "Yes, mamma." "That he was not to come here any more?"

"You will not communicate with him?" "Yes, mamma."

"What do you mean?" demanded the mother, fixing her eye severely upon her

"I mean no, mamma." Can I depend upon you!"

"Y-e-s, mamma. At least I think so."
"You think so."

"I will try, mamma."
"Come here," sald the mother. The daughter approached. Mrs. Cloverlie drew her down and imprinted a kiss upon her cheek. The kiss was to gild the pill she was forcing her daughter to swallow. Kitty seemed to understand that this was to end the interview. She went out of her stately moth-

er's presence and upstairs to her own room. There she threw herself on the bed and the tears that had been ready to come burst forth Mrs. Cloverlie touched an electric bell.

this company as you might know, you would see the absurdity of my asking you to tamper with the 'statement.' Our net surplus is \$750,000." mervant with a neat white apron ruffled at the bottom and a French cap entered. "Jane," said the mistress, "hereafter when the mail comes you are to bring it directly to

in no case to give any letter

east one text. I have applied such a test with a satisfactory result. If Tom had been wonder stricken before

furing the interview, he was now paralyzed with astonishment. "You will be elected assistant secretary at the annual meeting next week, and your sal-

ary will be \$5,000 a year. 'You don't mean it, sir," gasped Tem. "I certainly do," said the president, smiling.
"You may be ready to enter on your duties

ing will occur on the 9th." "Are you sure they will elect me?" asked Tom, with a sudden stopping of his heart, "I manage this company," replied the pres-

on the 10th of January. The directors' meet-

ident sententiously. "But why do you give me so much salary!" "On secount of the responsibility you will assume. I would rather pay \$5,000 to a man I put faith in than \$1,000 to a man I'm

not sure of, "And you're sure of me?" "Perfectly."

Tom tried to say something, but there was a choking sensation about the throat which prevented. Mr Lester bowed him out poitely, and he went to his deak

"A letter for Miss Kitty, m'm." Jane handed her mistress an envelope on a silver salver. It was covered over with flowers and naughty looking little cupids, stamped on the paper, except a small island space in the center for the address. Mrs. Cloverlie took the missive, put on her glasses and examined the address.

"I expects its a walingtine," said Jane. The mistress did not reply. The writing somewhat resembled that of a Mr. Flint, an month, took off his coat, put on a light one, with ink marks on the sleeve, which admielderly suitor for Miss Kitty's hand, and one who would be decidedly acceptable to her rably represented a shower-they were mother. Mr. Flint was a millionaire.

on a stool, and took up a bundle of papers, on the head of each of which was printed "Daily Report." Tom was a clerk in an "Bring me some warm water, Jane." The water was brought, the gum softened and out came a valentine. The matron read the centents over two or three times to be sure there was nothing in it indicating that "The president would like to speak with it could be from Tom Horton. you," said a boy, who suddenly poked his head into the compartment where Horton worked and withdrew it as suddenly.

"What nonsense some people can write. If John Flint wrote that he's a fool," she mut-

But that mattered not. Flint had million to gild his "straightened forehead." Miss Cloverlie put the valentine back in the envelope, scaled it over and directed Jane to take it to Miss Kitty.

Why is it that a woman must always examine a superscription before she opens a letter! We don't know why it is so; we only know it to be a fact.

Kitty held the valentine up and read the address a number of times before she tore it open. Then she read:

A leaden February cloud

Lies on the sky this morn, Each tree with ice is covered o'er, The shrubs of leaves are shorn "That's pretty likely," observed Kitty to "If the trees are covered with ice, there can't very well be leaves on the shrubs. I think that's from Mr. Flint. He scribbles,

To be to thee Revered, beloved maid. All any lover e'er can be, Through gore I'd gladly wade "What nonsense!" exclaimed Kitty. "To

think of putting 'gore' in a valentine! It's certainly from Mr. Flint. He hasn't any Pure maiden deign this morn to look On your despondent lover; Sweet are to him the slightest smiles That round your red lips hover.

"That's very nice. It's much better than talking about 'gore.' But I can't look on him when he isn't here."

On your blue eyes Fair heaven lies; Faint blushes spread In clouds of red;

Coming and going on your cheek divine, Eternal be our love, my Valentine.

"Isn't that lovely? Mr. Flint never wrote the last part of it, I know. I wish a valentine would come from Tom. Dear Tom. she said dreamily. "What a beautiful valentine he could write if he only would. But he wouldn't waste his time that way; he's too practical."

She threw the valentine on a table carelessly, and sitting down by a window took up a book. She had read half a dozen pages when something seemed to sting her right in the center of the brain. She sprang to the valentine, seized it eagerly, read and reread it, turned it wrong side foremost, upside down and cat-a-cornered. Then she held it up to the window to look through it. After that she laid it on the table and rubbed her hand all over the surface, both the face and back. Presently her eye took in a word composed of six first letters of as many lines-the word "letter." That gave her the clew. In a moment she read, "A letter at postoffice.

The valentine was a simple acrostic. A neighbor opposite looking in at Kitty's window remarked that Miss Cloverlie had gone stark mad. She was whirling around room holding a letter above her head, like a lunatic.

"Is there anything for Kitty Cloverlief" asked a timid voice of a man standing behind "Mr. Warren is to be vice president next a diminutive window at the general delivery year," the president went on. Tom was obliged for the information, but didn't see

of the postoffice.
"What name?" asked the man brusquely. "Kitty Cloverlie," repeated the girl blush

"Nothing for Kitty Clover!" said the man after looking over the letters in "C."
"Cloverlie," said Kitty nervously. "Can't you speak louder, miss?

"Cloverlie!" repeated the girl scarcely above a whisper, though she thought she was shouting, and in terror lest some one except the delivery clerk would bear her. "There's one for Miss Catherine Cloverlie," said the man, tossing her a note.

Kitty seized it and stuffed it in her pocket.

Then she went home, and locked herself in her room and read her letter four times without intermission. It was from Tom Horton, and informed her of his good luck, and reminded her of her promise to go to him when-ever he should be able to take care of her. Kitty laid down her note, and cried a little, and then laughed a little, and then she took it up and read it twice again.

That evening Mrs. Cloverlie was sitting by the lamp on the table in the library reading a magazine. Her daughter was on the lounge pretending to read also. "Mamma," she said suddenly, and evidently

after some effort at plucking up courage. "What is it, dear?" "Supposing," said Kitty; "supposing that om should be promoted in his business and

get a great big salary, would you consent to

"No," said the mother peremptorily. "Why not, mamma?" asked her child, pleadingly. "Because I don't wish it."

Mrs. Cloverlie was one of those women who prefer houses and lands or stocks and bonds to all other considerations.

Kitty said no more and soon after went up

"Laws a mercy!" exclaimed Jane, entering her mistress' presence, "Miss Kitty ain't in her room; the bed ain't been slept in; the things is all scattered about, and she must a been and gone and run away." Mrs. Cloverlie was too much shocked to reply at once. Presently she faltered: "Are you sure, Jane?"

"Certain sure, m'm," replied Jane. Mrs. Cloverlie got up and went up stairs to her daughter's room to see for herself. A note was pinned to

the curtain on the dressing table informing the mother that Kitty had determined to cast her lot with Tom Horton and hoped her dear mother wouldn't think too hardly of her, and forgive her. Mrs. Cloverlie returned to her own room. Jane

followed her anx-"Jane!" said the mistress, mitted her to get a letter."

"I didn't give her no letter, m'm. "How else could be have opened communi cation with her? You are discharged." There was no reply to be made and none would have been considered. Jane with-

afternoon Mrs. Cloverlie went through her departed daughter's writing desk. There she found the valentine. She took it down stairs and gave it a thorough examination. She puzzled over it for half an hour. Suddenly a light broke in upon her obtuseness. She fell back in her chair with a

gasp.

After she had become more composed she touched the electric bell.

Jane entered. 'Jane, you may continue in your place." "Yes m'm.

Jane was about to withdraw. "And, Jane," called the mistress, "if ever a postman brings another of those detestable valentines to the door of this house you are to decline to receive it. The custom is atrocious.

"The comics is awful, m'm." "That'll do, Jane, you may go."

Mr. and Mrs. Horton managed to get on comfortably on \$5,000 a year for a while. Then their income was tripled by the death of Mrs. Cloverlie. The old lady always showed signs of broken health on the return of St. Valentine's day. Finally, she became so feeble that she never left the house, except to ride out occasionally. The last time she took an airing, it happened to be during the second week in February. The shop windows were filled with myriads of valentines. The sight produced a dis-tressing effect on the old lady. She was driven home immediately, but the shock was more than she



F. A. MITCHEL

St. Valentine's in 1754. A forward young miss in this year, or thereabouts, contributed a series of essays, and in one of them she thus refers to St. Valentine's day:

"Last Friday was Valentine's day, and the night before I got five bay leaves and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow and the fifth to the middle, and the dreamed of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out. But to make it more sure I boiled an egg hard, and took out the yolk and filled it with salt; and when I went to bed ate it, shell and all, without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lover's names upon bits of paper and rolled them up in clay and put them into water, and the first that rose up was to be our valentine. Would you think it! Mr. Blossom was my man. I lay abed and shut my eyes all the morning till he came to our house, for I would not have seen so other man before him for all the world."

To the Professional Bumorist. When the billy goat and plumber, the forman tramp and drummer, kerosene, small boy

ice cream and soda water, "Til be a sister, daugh

When there is an embargo on all jokes from Chicago; when the car stove and all other jokes in fine

Have been duly relegated to the past, let it be stated, that I'll still remain your constant valentine. The Spains Four



Tom's heart is quite free— Could it have been he? (1 hope that he meant it) Now, who can it be— I wander who sent it?



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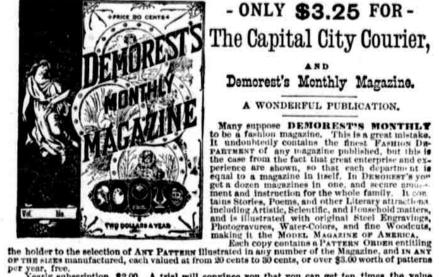
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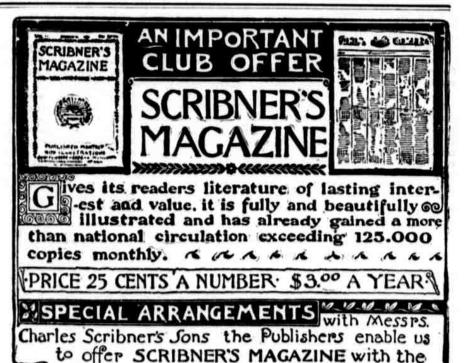
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