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sake of seeing her again, anyhow!"

Walking out into the corridor, he dropped the letter down the mail-chute unstamped, like any other missive sent on public business.

Thus it fell out that when Mr. Barnwell returned home that night he was met by his daughter, all smiles once more.

"It's all coming out right, after all," said Mary. "See this letter! I'm so glad you didn't see him to-day, because you might have said something horrid, and here he is just as kind as can be!"

Mr. Barnwell opened the letter and read, half aloud and half to himself, as follows:—

Executive Office,
Commissioners of the District of
Columbia,
Washington, May 27.

Miss Mary T. Barnwell,
Howard Avenue, Mount Pleasant.

Dear Madam:

Replying to your favor of the 24th inst., the commissioner directs me to say that a mistake on the part of the clerical force has just been brought to his attention, whereby your communication was confused with another, and a misleading answer sent.

Although it is seldom possible, owing to the great pressure of public affairs, for the commissioner to comply with a request such as the one made, he directs me to say that he will make every effort to be present Wednesday morning and present the badges as requested.

Respectfully,
J. C. Charlton.

"Now isn't that fine of him?" said Mary. "You should see him, father. He's so agreeable in his ways. And young, too, for a commissioner!"

The next morning Cooper set out for Mount Pleasant. The whole plan seemed absurd and foolhardy to him now and he would have given anything in the world but a sight of Mary—yes, even that—to get out of it. He summoned enough of his habitual audacity to see it through, however. With a face that looked like a man going to his own funeral, he began by telling the children how glad he was to be there this morning. How or when he got to the end he never knew. He hurriedly bid Miss Barnwell adieu. She thanked him and added as he went out:

"You will come and see me—that is, come and visit the school again some time, won't you?"

"Yes yes," said Cooper. "Good day!" And as he hurried out he said to himself: "What a fool I was! I'll never dare to go there again as commissioner, and I've blocked the chance of going there myself!"

In New York, a city editor fences himself off from the clamoring world outside by a barricade of gates and doors, guarded with the vigilance of a Cerberus by a small army of office-boys. To pass them, more formality is required than you would look for in the palace of the Shah of Persia. In the office where Cooper worked this would have been deemed bombastic, undemocratic, and expensive—particularly, expensive. There anyone was free to come, and many an odd piece from the city's debris found his way in during the long nights to recount some tale of woe, or demonstrate that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, he was really perfectly sober. The great difficulty was that if you did go in, you could seldom get anybody to pay any attention to you.

This was the trouble that an elderly gentleman seemed to be having about eleven o'clock on the night of the day made notable by the dismal appearance of John C. Cooper as Commissioner Charlton in Mount Pleasant. He had already asked twice from the door if this was the city editor's room, but nobody heeded him. Most of the staff had just got in after covering their evening assignments, and were leaning over their desks in their shirt-sleeves, each pounding away at a typewriter. From these machines such a clicking, clacking was going up that nothing else could be heard.

So the man entered the room, and, approaching the nearest desk, inquired: "Is this the city department?"

"Um!"

"Is the city editor in?"

"Um!" replied the individual addressed, without stopping in his work.

"Which is his desk?"

"Vrare," snapped out the man at the typewriter, in the effort to get through saying "over there" as soon as possible. The visitor strolled off to the opposite corner.

"Is this the city editor?" he asked with undiminished politeness.

"Cross yonder," said the young man encountered, making his remarks more intelligible by a wave of his thumb toward the ceiling.

The stranger approached a figure occupying one of several places at a large table, where he had hewn out just enough room for his elbows from a pile of census bulletins, ancient newspapers, undelivered mail, and reports from the Interstate Commerce Commission, which had been accumulating under every city editor since the office was built.

He acknowledged that he was the party sought after with a bob of his chin, and went on counting the letters in a three-bank head which he had just written while the man told his story. He did not ask him to take a seat. This was partly because he feared the caller might stay too long, and partly for the reason that when the reporters were all in at once there weren't enough chairs to go around.

"Commissioner Charlton you say, mumbled the city editor, without so much as shifting his cigar. "At Mount Pleasant. Cooper—take this story, please!"

As the stranger approached, Cooper recognized his caller of the day before, and wondered if he had appeared to torment him again. He was quickly reassured. Mr. Barnwell explained that since Commissioner Charlton had been so kind to come, after all, he thought it right that some notice of it should be taken in the paper.

"And what did the commissioner say?" inquired Cooper.

"Well, to tell the truth, I gather that he didn't say much of anything worth the saying," responded Mr. Barnwell easily.

"Oh, indeed!" remarked Cooper politely.

"At least, my daughter said he seemed to feel about as much at home as a fly in a barrel of molasses, or words to that effect. Of course that's just between you and me, though. I don't mean that he should hear of it, or anything like that should appear in the paper, you know. I thought probably you could make up a little speech for the occasion quite as good as his."

"Very likely I might," said Cooper dryly. "Let's see—you say this was at eleven o'clock?"

"Ye-es—no. Let me see. Was it eleven or ten? Just wait a minute, and I'll ask my daughter. She's waiting just outside in the hall—or, better still, I'll get her to step in."

"Oh no, no! I wouldn't think of it," called out Cooper, catching his friend by the arm. "It's of no consequence, I assure you. Don't trouble yourself in the least."

"Oh, it's no trouble. I'll ask her to come right in."

"For Heaven's sake, don't!" remonstrated Cooper in consternation. "I haven't time for it, anyhow."

Then, seeing that Mr. Barnwell was already half way across the room he concluded it would be wiser to go out to his destruction than have to overtake him there before the whole staff, he jumped up and hurried out through the door, dexterously kicking aside the cut of Admiral Dewey that held it open as he went, so that it swung shut with a bang behind him.

When the afternoon of the next day came, Cooper did not start for the District Building at his usual hour. Instead he turned his face toward Mount Pleasant to meet Mr. Barnwell, who had had this to say in parting from him the night before:

"You understand, young man, that you will be at my door at two o'clock to-morrow afternoon. We will go at once to my daughter's school, where you will explain the whole matter and apologize to Miss Barnwell for this outrageous piece of conduct. We will do