

How came my wife to write to other than her husband in such endearing terms? Could she have deceived—
I caught myself by the throat to choke back the vile-thought word.

Could it possibly be some old letter written to myself in those days when we were surrounded by enemies to our true loves, which had by some remote chance fallen into this person's hands? No!

I could repeat, line for line, word for word, her letters to me, from her first, a simple, fluttering invitation to a dinner-party at her father's, to the last fond "Take care of yourself, Freddy, darling, for the sake of your wife and baby," written during Christmas week, when I was compelled to proceed to York to look after my uncle's legacy.

Could I be mistaken in the legacy? No!
The letters clear, well defined, large as her bountiful heart.

The signature the same. The same odd habit of leaving a margin on the left hand of the page, as is the practice of Government officials.

The more I thought over it, the greater my perplexity, the sterner my resolve, cost what it might, to unravel, thread by thread, the mystery which surrounded the letter of my dead wife, like unto a shroud.

And here I repeat, for I write the occurrence according to the order of the event, that never, oh, not for the one thousandth part of a second, did I cast the shadow of a doubt as to the motives of my dead wife in writing this letter.

To doubt her, would have been to rend the white robe of the Angel of Purity. With burning eagerness I scrambled out of a train at Canterbury, for I was in an agony of pain, and nothing but the intense pressure of my mind could have enabled me to move.

Of the porter, who assisted me to alight, I asked—

"Did you attend the mail from London this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see a tall gentleman in a grey suit, pointed moustaches, and yellow gloves?"

"I'm sure I cannot say, sir," then turning to a brother official, he shouted—

"I say, Atkins, did you see a mail gentleman, yellow gloves, 14½ up?"

"The mail always wears yellow gloves," responded the other. "Yes, I see a tall gentleman talking to the station-master."

"Where is the station-master? I must see him directly."

"This way, sir. Beg pardon, you're werry lame: lean on me, sir," said the first porter, good-naturedly, as I limped in the direction of the station-master's office.

The station-master was absent, but a person acting for him was seated engaged in writing.

"Did a tall gentleman, wearing a grey suit, yellow gloves, pointed moustache, alight here?" I asked.

"Yes," without looking up.

"Did he go on by the train?"

"Yes."

"Did he mention anything about a gentleman falling from the carriage?"

"He did," then looking up—"I beg your pardon, sir, are you the accident?"

"I am."

"Pray be seated."

I sat down.

"Yes, sir, he alighted, and gave me those, pointing to my rug, umbrella, and travelling case, which I had in the carriage with me at the time of the occurrence."

"Did he give you particulars?"

"He did."

Here he referred to some written memoranda, and read rapidly.

"He said your manner was very strange, that you objected to his smoking, and were very insolent. He said he was reading a letter—that you asked him for it—that you made a grab at it—that it fell out of the window—that you jumped out after it—that he tried to prevent you, and that he considers you are insane. Good God, sir, it was a frightful thing to jump from a mail train. How you are alive to tell the tale is miraculous, and—here the official broke forth—and remember, sir, that for any injury you may have sustained, the Company is not in any way liable."

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"I do not know, sir."

I lost all patience.

"And how in the name of heaven could you allow him to go without ascertaining his name? You shall be held accountable for this gross stupidity and neglect of duty. By heavens you shall!"

So brutally rude was I, that I have since stopped at Canterbury to apologize.

"Be that as it may, he dashed out of this office to jump into the train."

"Then he went on?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you tell me where he was going to?"

"I cannot. Perhaps the examiner of tickets might."

"Can I see him?"

"You can."

The functionary in question having been summoned and interrogated—

"He did remember the party, who gained his carriage as he was locking the door. He examined his ticket while the train was moving. It was a 'through' to Paris."

This was a clue at all events. I should be only a few hours behind him, and, unless he was on some mission of life and death, the chances were in favour of his stopping in Paris.

To detail my sensations whilst waiting for the train, and during the subsequent journey, were to enter into a psychological analysis for which the reader would scarcely thank me; suffice it to say, I reached Paris in a state of fever, with a gloomy fear beating at my heart, that I should be forced to yield to its tightening grasp ere the newly created object of my life could be attained.

What cared I for the sunlight of glorious summer morning?

What cared I for the beauty of the Boulevards?

The letter of my dead wife was lying against my bounding heart. The shade of my dead wife was calling upon me to have the clouds enveloping it dispelled. My whole being was concentrated in this one fixed idea, and I was as dead to outward influence as the statue-like mummy in the pyramids of the Ptolemys.

On arrival at Paris, I made inquiries of the most respectable looking official on the platform relative to the passenger I was

in search of. The official in question called a sort of council of war of *sous-officiers*, which resulted in my being informed that the party in question had alighted from the English mail train of the previous evening, and had driven in coach Number 234 to the Hôtel du Louvre, Rue Rivoli.

If I desired further information I should apply to the Prefect of Police.

In a whirlwind of triumphant feeling I entered a coach, directing the driver to proceed to the hotel in question—I entered.

There was no one to attend to me; I crawled up the steps leading to the *Salon*.

I stopped a waiter who was hurrying past me.

"Did a tall gentleman in a grey suit, pointed moustache, and yellow gloves arrive here last night?"

"*Faas, Monsieur.*"

"His name. His name?"

"Beneson, Monsieur."

"Show me to his room, quick! quick!" I almost screamed.

"Monsieur cannot see him. He am gone out *d'une grand vilaine*. He forget dis."

The waiter produced from his pocket a Russian leather cigar-case, in burnished letters the initials C. B. shone like light.

It was his. I was on the right track.

"Show me to his room. Quick! quick!"

"Monsieur cannot see him. He am gone out."

"Where has he gone? Tell me. Here is a sovereign. Where has he gone to?"

"He leave direction mit Gustave, me tink. I vill to see," and the waiter left in search of Gustave.

In a moment he returned, carrying a slip of paper, on which was written—

"If Monsieur de Crut calls upon Mr. Charles Beneson before ten o'clock, say that Mr. Beneson has gone to 13 Rue ———, where he will remain until Monsieur de C. returns."

Snatching the paper from the hands of the astonished waiter, and forgetful of my aching frame, I hurried down the staircase—into the courtyard—re-entered the coach, which was still in waiting, and shouted to the driver:

"Numero treize, Rue ———. Vite! Vite!"

The agony I endured of mind and body during the journey from the Hôtel du Louvre to the Rue ——— will never be effaced from my memory. While I write this the recollection of my sufferings is causing every nerve to quiver, every joint to ache. I could not conceive that physical agony could reach so high a pitch without killing that upon which it fed.

Arrived at the Rue ———, the coachman experienced little difficulty in discovering No. 13. I alighted, and having inquired at the porter's lodge for the object of my search, was informed that I should ring at the first door on my right, as the gentleman I had described was visiting the family who resided *au premier*.

I rang the bell as directed.

"Monsieur Beneson?"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Pent on voir?"

"Oui, monsieur."

I brushed past her, tried the handle of a door opposite me. It yielded, the door opened, and I saw—

My travelling companion, in the same grey suit, standing at a window. Beside him a young girl, his right arm encircling her waist.

I had entered softly, and neither of them were aware of my presence.

Tiger-like I lay waiting for a spring.

Tiger-like I clared at my prey ere I burst upon it.

He was talking about me.

"He must have been smashed to a mummy."

The girl shuddered.

Little did he imagine that I stood within three paces of him.

"Why did you not seize him, Charles?"

"They were conversing in English."

"I tried to do so, but he seemed possessed of the strength of three ordinary men. He knocked me into the corner of the carriage like a racket-ball."

"Poor creature! You should have given him the letter," said the girl, compassionately.

"Not if he was going to jump again. Poor devil! it's not giving him much trouble now."

"More, perhaps, than you think," said I.

He turned rapidly round. So did the girl.

He blanched. She screamed.

"Good God!" he said, and threw his arm round, as if to protect her.

I glanced at myself in the opposite mirror.

I was a ghastly sight.

My hair clotted with blood; blood upon my livid face, and where the dark red stain did not show broad streaks of caked grime and dust; my eyes sunk and fiery, as those of a ferret; my apparel in disorder; my right hand in my breast-pocket grasping the letter of my dead wife.

I glared at my own image.

"Good God!" said he; "what is the meaning of this?"

"I want to have an explanation with you, sir," I replied.

I saw he was preparing for a spring.

"You said I was possessed of the strength of three ordinary men. Don't try it now. I am armed."

"For heaven's sake," sobbed the girl, throwing herself between Beneson and me, "don't harm him. He has done you no wrong. He will give you money. I will give you money. Take anything you like—everything."

"Hush!" said Beneson to the girl; "there is no danger. I have only to shout, and half a dozen gendarmes will spring into this room."

This was brag.

"I have no desire to frighten this young lady, and I apologize for entering thus unexpectedly into her presence. My business is with you, sir; and as to your bravado, it's too absurd."

I had brought him to bay.

"What do you require of me? I do not know you. You can have no claim on me. You are labouring under some terrible delusion. My name is Beneson. I am a barrister, living in the Middle Temple, London. If you think to frighten me by your threats you are mistaken in your man. I am willing to make every allowance, on account of the terrible accident you have met with, and—"

He was coming towards the door.

I placed my back against it.

"You don't leave this room until you tell me how you came by this."

And as I spoke I drew the letter from my breast-pocket. Thinking it was a weapon, the girl, with a dashing bravery, caught my arm, while Beneson jumped aside.

He did not recognize it.

"Tell me how you came by this letter."

"What letter?"

"This is the letter I risked my life to gain. This is the letter you refused to part with. You see I am not a man to be turned aside from a purpose. Tell me how you came by it."

He seemed intensely astonished, bewildered.

"I received it by the post the morning I left London," he replied.

"It's a lie," said I.

"I state the truth," he replied.

"When was it written?"

"The day before I received it."

"It's a lie. That letter must have been written before the 19th of last January, and it was written by the hand of my dead wife."

"You are mad," he said. "That letter was written in this house on the day before yesterday, and was written by this lady," turning, as he spoke, to the young girl.

"This ready call on your imagination will not serve your purpose. I know the writing too well; and by heaven I am not to be trifled with. There is that contained in it which demands an explanation, and I will tear it from your tongue."

"Oh! sir," cried the girl, "this is indeed my letter. As I hope for salvation, that letter in your hand was written by me."

Truth shone from out her eyes. I felt as if I had received a blow.

I seized her hand, drew her towards an open Davenport, and, in a husky voice, cried—

"Copy that letter."

She opened the desk, drew out a sheet of pink paper, and prepared to write.

I watched her as she dipped the pen into the ink, I watched her as she wrote the first word. I watched her with unerring, unflattering exactitude. She copied the letter, copied it as if 'twere done by a machine. The same large letters, the same word "Fannie." She looked up at me. Truth in her eyes.

I saw my error. I saw that on account of the strange similarity in the writing I had mistaken her letter to her lover for a letter written by my dead wife.

During the fever that ensued, I found Samaritanism in the hearts of Charles Beneson and of the young girl, whose handwriting bore such a fatal resemblance to that of my dead wife. —London Society.

VARIETIES.

Somebody proposes that every bald-headed man should have his monogram painted on the exposed spot.

Note for Darwin: In time the mulberry tree becomes a silk gown—and a silk gown becomes a woman.

In noticing a running match recently, the reporter says some one present took the prize, but a meddlesome and firm policeman made him put it right back where he took it from.

The city editor of the Jacksonville, Illinois, *Journal*, in writing an obituary of a "highly respectable citizen," says: "He has gone to that undiscovered *burn*." The sorrowing relations of the highly respectable are looking for the end men.

They know how to stop a runaway in Lockport, New York. They do not fling themselves in the path of the fiery steed, nor pull madly at the reins, nor execute any of the time-honoured manoeuvres. They just put a newly dug cellar in his way, and he falls in, and there he is.

Shut your eyes and listen mit me," said Uncle Van Heyde. "Vell, de first night I open store I counts de monies, and finds him nix right, I count him and dere be tree dollar gone; and vat does yer tink I does den?" "I can't say." "Vy, I did not count him any more, and he comes out shoost right ever since."

A poet of the North thus alludes to a display of the Aurora Borealis:—"Last evening, as soon as Tithonus had retired for the night and was enjoying his first snooze, his spouse, the rosy-fingered Aurora, daughter of the morning, snatched the saffron-coloured coverlet from his bed, and wrapping it about her, danced a jig in the northern sky."

Nokes is not in favour of the nine-hour movement just now: he prefers to work ten to twelve. His explanation is that when he goes home to tea, the angel of the house has got some little amusement in store for him in the shape of moving stoves or pulling up carpets, and he doesn't hanker after amusement since he was a boy; he would rather work.

The latest hair pomade is the product of English chemical skill, and is called *Zylophaganzenodachium*. But what's the use of beautifying and glossing your hair if you have got to fracture your jaw? The inventor, who has left himself in the hands of some learned person yet practical joker, will be inclined to alter his high grease tone if he discovers that this fierce word untwisted means an apartment to receive insects.

There is a cynical lady in Meriden, Ct., who amuses herself with the polite hypocrisy of society in a curious way. She has an orange plant in her parlour which bears neither bud nor blossom, but she has had two full blown flowers and a half opened bud of wax placed upon the barren stalk. Her callers all admire the sweet perfume of the lovely flowers, and the gentlemen have noticed that the bud has expanded considerably since they called before.

This is the way in which they smartly advertise a cosmetic:—During the reception of Alexis at Topoka, according to a local sheet, a certain young lady was the cynosure of all eyes as she promenaded, leaning heavily upon the cork flipper of a Russian count, whose breast looked like the show-window of a tin-shop, glittering as it was with temperance badges, baggage cheques, and the gorgeous paraphernalia of a dollar store. His fair companion's face was flushed with excitement and ——— Bloom of Youth, and her eyes fairly flashed with merriment and belladonna as she listened to the diphtheria-producing monosyllables of the count.