

granted the request. Thus the plot proceeded.

As the correspondence advanced through its various stages it became decidedly more interesting to Jack. The work of writing the letters, which had at first been something of a task, had become almost a pleasure and he fairly surprised himself at the ease with which he found himself able to express the most tender sentiments. The fact was that Lydia wrote such beautiful love letters that Jack could hardly help being inspired by them to great achievements in the same line. "I must be careful," said Jack to himself "or I will begin to think that I believe in all this love nonsense that I am writing."

Jack's schedule of love letters was about made up, for he had proposed to Lydia in due form and was accepted. He was aware by certain marks on the envelopes, as well as the rumors that prevailed in the village about his love affair, that the postmaster had been tampering with his letters, but how to bring about his detection in the act in a theatrical manner he hardly knew. Nothing very deep was to be expected of Jack in the way of a plot, and the best plan he could think of was to place some very fine and powerful snuff into the envelope, so that old Sill when he opened the letter would be seized with an uncontrollable fit of sneezing upon which Jack would rush in and catch him in the very act of reading his letter.

As this letter was never intended to reach Miss Lydia, Jack was less guarded in its composition than he might otherwise have been. He treated it in fact rather as an exercise in composition and exhausted his

vocabulary of endearment upon its fair object. He poured out the whole devotion of his soul at Lydia's feet and implored her to consent to be married to him at a very early day which he named. Why Jack should have wasted so much eloquence on a letter that was to be stopped in transit can only be explained on the theory that his pride of composition had somewhat obscured his judgment.

When Mr. Jack Halsey, with this letter in his pocket, took his way to the post office he felt highly elated at the prospect of publicly exposing Mr. Silvanus Plummer. The old man had grown accustomed to Jack's visits and was in fact expecting him when he handed in the letter. Then the window was closed and the postmaster was secure in his own little domain.

Jack had become aware that although when the post office window was down Silvanus could not be reached, there was a side door from the yard by which the private room could be entered. Here he stationed himself as soon as he had mailed the letter to await results. He was not kept long in suspense. In a couple of minutes or so he heard the postmaster, sneezing with such violence as seemed almost to threaten the stability of his head. With this Jack rushed into the private room, where a very laughable scene presented itself.

Old Sill was standing in the middle of the room, his face covered with a brown powder and his whole body violently agitated by repeated convulsions of sneezing. Jack's letter and its envelope had been thrown on the table, where he plainly saw them.

"You old rascal," said Halsey, angrily, "you have been reading my correspondence; give me my letter."