

My father was a Baptist minister, and after I had graduated from the village schools he decided to send me to Havard. While attending this great institution of learning I caught what is known as the "stamp fever,"—that is, I was seized with a desire to collect everything bearing the semblance of a postage stamp, and so deeply enthused was I with this hobby that I soon became the possessor of a very fine collection. To the reader this must seem of the most trivial importance, and you will doubtless wonder how a man with but a few hours, perhaps minutes, to live can write of such boyish follies, but all this bears, indirectly, upon what I am about to confess.

I was called from college when in the commencement of my sophomore year by a telegram announcing the death of my father, and upon settling up the estate I found that it would be impossible for me to return and that I must work for my daily bread.

Accordingly I secured, through friends, a position as book-keeper of a small bank in a neighboring town. It was there that I met Lena Clyde and fell an easy victim to her charms. She was belle of the village and, of course, had many admirers, and among them was Howard Cameron, editor of the town paper.

This young man was about my own age, and we soon became fast friends—*friend*; what a mockery the word seems when applied to the villain who, when dearer to me than a brother, wrecked my life and made me what I am, but I must continue my story ere my feeble strength gives out.

We had been friends for several months before I discovered that Howard was a stamp collector also. This only served to bind us closer together, and many a pleasant evening we spent together over our albums and exchanging such duplicate stamps as we possessed.

I had been paying attention to Lena for some time, and it seemed that she looked upon my suit with favor, and at last I felt that I dared ask her to be my wife.

One evening, as I sat with Howard in the little printing-office, I told him all, for our intimacy had ripened to such an extent that we had few secrets from each other.

He seemed greatly interested, and when I told him all my hopes and fears he slapped me upon the shoulder and said: "I wish you success from the bottom of my heart, Charlie, and if ever anyone was deserving of so peerless a creature as Miss Clyde it is my friend—my brother—Charles Camden."

Oh! to what depths of perfidy the human soul can descend, and it is little wonder that one grows cynical and distrustful when those we love and trust most turn upon us and strike the blow which ends all hope of earthly happiness.

Well, the next day I proposed and was accepted, and my plea for an early marriage was granted. The nuptials were to take place in two weeks, and in that short time I believe I experienced all the happiness which it is possible for a human being to know. I lived in a heaven of bliss; I seemed floating upon the clouds. Work, friends, even my treasured stamp album, were forgotten;—I only knew, only cared, that I loved and was beloved by the dearest, loveliest girl in the whole wide world.

Poor fool that I was.

Howard willingly consented to be "best man," and as the eventful day drew nearer, preparations were made for the quiet little wedding which was to take place from Lena's little home.

Howard was my constant companion, and his kindness and brotherly interest makes me shudder when I

think that he was even then contemplating my death blow.

At last the eventful day arrived. Soon I was to be the happiest man alive, I told myself. The ceremony was to take place at 8 p. m., and as Howard was to accompany me to the cottage I waited for him at my boarding place until 7:55; then, wondering greatly at his non-appearance, I started for the house.

I was met at the door by Mrs. Clyde, who informed me that Lena had asked to be left alone for the last half hour, but that she would go and call her.

I entered the room, which was full of friends and neighbors, and awaited her coming. I heard her mother ascend the stairs and enter her room,—then there was a scream and a heavy fall.

We rushed up-stairs and found the old lady lying upon the floor in a faint with a bit of paper clutched between her fingers. An awful fear arose in my heart and almost stilled its beating. My brain reeled and I clutched at a chair for support.

Then I took the paper from between the cold fingers and read the death-blow to my hopes in these few lines:—

DEAR CHARLIE,—I have gone with Howard, whom I love better than I ever could love you. Forgive me if you can.
LENA.

Two months later I arose from an attack of brain fever with but one thought in my mind—but one thing to live for—revenge on the man who had ruined my life.

I cast about me for a means of sating my vengeance and struck upon one which I think truly original. My eye fell upon my stamp album one day and my course was plain.

I took a trip to ———, and there proceeded to put my plan into execution. I took a postage stamp, one of the 3c. green, then in use, and carefully smeared the gum with a deadly poison, but one which would leave no trace. What could be simpler than my plan, or safer? I was in a distant city. The breath of suspicion could never reach me, and yet the little stamp would do its deadly work as surely as would knife or revolver.

I wrote Howard Cameron a letter in a disguised hand inquiring about some trivial matter, signed an assumed name, enclosed the poisoned stamp for reply, and dropped it into the nearest letter box. Then I awaited results. They came soon enough.

After a sleepless night I arose, dressed, and went out into the street. A newsboy was crying his papers. I bought one, threw the boy a coin, and hurried to my room. My hands trembled so that the paper fluttered like a leaf in the wind. For some moments I dared not look for what I hoped, yet feared, to find.

At last, partially subduing the momentary weakness, I opened the paper. There, among the latest telegraphic dispatches, I found what I sought.

W ———, Ohio, Dec. 17, 1877.
"Howard Cameron, editor of the ———, dropped dead in his office at 8 o'clock last night. Heart disease probably the cause."

Only a few lines, yet it told me I was avenged. I laughed aloud. Then the reaction came and I sank back into a chair trembling. I was a murderer! As surely did the brand of Cain rest upon my brow as though a knife in my hand had dealt the death-blow.

My strength is fast failing, but there is little more to tell. Three days later, moved by a morbid curiosity I could not control, I called at the post-office and gave the name I had assumed in writing to