

A POSTAGE-STAMP STORY.

Primarily I am a postage stamp; just a common, every day, two-cent stamp, possessing only such attributes as are peculiar to my class. Indeed, if I were placed among a thousand of my brethren I doubt if the keenest observer would be able to point me out as being in any way distinguished. A vague gloom enshrouds that portion of my life preceding its development into one of the government agents (if I may so call myself); and I indistinctly remember having once been connected in some way with a copy of an English comic paper which drifted as an exchange into an American newspaper office, and thence quickly into a huge waste basket. From that time until arriving at my present state, I passed through the hands of paper-dealers, paper manufacturers, and divers clerks and careless people, my last distinct impression being received from an engraver's press.

I can scarcely be called a conceited person; still I am led to believe that my mission in the world is an important one. I am kind-hearted, of agreeable disposition and well satisfied with my lot. I frequently congratulate myself upon the good fortune which made me what I am. How much better to be, perchance, the bearer of some kind letter, a perfumed billet-doux, if you please, than a vulgar revenue stamp, fit only to adorn a box of ill smelling cigars or grace a barrel of inferior liquor.

A man hurriedly places a postage stamp upon a letter, which he drops in a convenient letter box, and entirely forgets the circumstance. It humbly serves his purpose; beyond that he does not care. But think for a moment of the travels of that same stamp, of the persons it meets, of the message it bears, and say it is not a sentient being

After my birth I was carefully accounted for to various commonplace officials, and, after some delay, sent to the postoffice of a certain eastern city. I was purchased soon afterward by Archibald Warrack, who tore me rudely from my friends, and after carrying me about in his pocket-book for a day or two, cast me into a certain dark drawer of his desk.

This Mr. Warrack was about 25, tall, graceful and altogether a very gentlemanly appear-

ing person. He dressed neatly and tastefully, but with no suggestion of foppishness. To be frank, I admired him from the beginning of our acquaintance. Regarding his social and financial status, he was a gentleman of artistic tastes—one of the grand army of dilettanti—possessing an ample bank account and a pedigree which was never questioned.

The desk, into a drawer of which I was so ignominiously thrust, stood in a sunny alcove separated from Mr. Warrack's studio by a heavy portiere. This little apartment was a very pleasant place, and Mr. Warrack spent considerable more time in lounging than he did in working in the great, bare room adjoining. Art was a hobby of mine, and it was with much satisfaction that I found myself placed in such a congenial atmosphere.

Soon after being transferred to the drawer I have before alluded to, I discovered that my quarters were shared by a number of other persons of my own kind, who were reposing on dainty perfumed envelopes. There were, however, black stains upon their escutcheons which showed them to be forever ruined. I made bold to introduce myself to one of these scarred veterans, and, after a few preliminary remarks concerning the weather, politics and so on, said:

"From your looks (date of cancelling) I infer that you have been dwelling with this Mr. Warrack for some time, and, being a stranger, I shall esteem it a favor if you will tell me such things as you feel at liberty to speak of concerning his private history."

"It's a sad case," said my friend, with a deep sigh. He looked haggard and worn, and was apparently in great distress.

"How sad?" I inquired sympathetically.

"A sad case," he continued, without heeding my interruption. "Less than six months ago I was the carrier of a letter, written by a young lady named Rariden—Miss Helen Rariden—to Mr. Warrack, the gentleman whose acquaintance you have recently made. This letter was written in reply to one from him in which he exhausted all the available adjectives of the English language in the sincerest avowals of love, closing with an offer of his heart and hand."

"And the letter of which you were the bearer contained—"