

the black-bordered one. The one carrying a sad, sad message to someone far away. The stern business-like letter with never a word or line of rhythm in it lay side by side with a commonplace envelope bearing a poem fresh from the hands and brain and heart and soul of one of the purest singers God ever gave the divine gift of poetry to. And then another voice broke the stillness and the rest shuddered as they heard its rough, brutal tones.

"And if ye air keeful, pard, ye kin kill the ole cuss wi' one blow o' yer club. He hain't no longer strong; jess a little tap—presto; he's dead an' the swag is yourn."

"Who dare speak of such a theme as murder. Do you know that I came from the hand of one of the highest judges in the land? Reveal yourself, villain, and let the strong hand of the law throttle your murderous design before it goes further," came from a long, legal missive with a red seal. But the criminal letter said not a word; it only slipped down out of sight and was covered finally by a letter from a farmer. In this latter letter was a check for one hundred dollars; and the letter was worded as follows: "Send me the one thousand in 'green goods' soon as possible. I think I can use them without much trouble."

Then all was quiet again for a period.

"Oh, dear boy, I hear bad news from you. Don't do it any more. It has killed your mother and is killing me, your poor old father. *Don't drink! Don't drink! Don't drink!*

"Aye! aye! so say we all," cried out four or five from a little pile.

"And when we cracked the last bottle, Jack, a sigh went round our little circle. We had piled in the stuff pretty freely

and were feeling good. *The last bottle!* That almost broke our hearts. Our motto is—'a merry life and a short one'—"

"Gracious, I smell something like a drunken man's breath. I don't want nothing more to do with you," broke in a long, lean, spidery envelope as it slipped down among a lot of jolly letters from some school girls. The spinster's letter lay there, drinking in with keen delight the merry prattle of the girls letters. It felt young again and—it made a stern determination to enter the lists once more and battle bravely for some man's heart. Helter skelter, rough and tumble—all in a mixed pile upon the table the letters were thrown by the hands of the mail clerk. Flutter, flitter, flash and flurry—here, there, everywhere, but all property distributed at last.

And when the recipients of each letter received his or her mail all were at last safely housed.

The tears that fell upon the black-bordered missive, the kisses rained upon the pink love letter, the pale look that confronted the business letter, and all cries of joy, the sobs of sorrow, the chuckles of exultation and the other thousand and one expressive terms and acts—all went out in air; and the mail bag never told the story of its romance.

A Half-penny Letter Post.

BY T. MARTIN WEARS.

WHEN on the 6th of May 1840, the inhabitants of these islands were granted the privilege of sending a letter, provided it did not exceed half an ounce in weight, to any part of Great Britain for the low charge of one penny, it was thought that this rate was so cheap, as to