Milred Medford

By W. L. French.

Dwight Junction was where the B. & N. crossed the W. W. & L. E. The crossing was at grade, and the W. W. & L. E. had stipulated that the B. & N. Co. must maintain at its own expense a block tower, with distance and home semaphore signals and derailing switches to make the crossing absolutely safe, and this the B. & N. agreed to do. The junction was two miles from Ackley, a division point on the B. & N., and to aid in checking the trains out of Ackley they built a long passing track to the junction and placed telegraph operators in charge of the tower and signals.

The operators boarded at Ackley, and either went down there and back to Dwight Junction on a railroad bicycle furnished by the company, or on their bicycles along the wagon road, and when it was not muddy and the weather was fine they preferred the latter method. The day man, in May, 1898, was a middle-aged man, who had been in a position where there was a great deal of clerical work to perform, and he had asked for the place in the hope that the change would benefit his health. The night operator, Oscar Phelps, was a young man just well started on his career as a telegrapher. He had worked at the business just long enough not to become disgusted and yet not long enough to have lost his ambition for promotion. The worst fault he had with his position at Dwight Junction was that it was night work, and it deprived him of his evenings for recreation. He had yet the lesson to learn that a railroad man is a slave to duty, and has no time for recreation when there is any need for his services.

It was rather a lonely place to be sure. The monotony at night was even greater than at a depot in a country town, where the loafers came to see the passenger trains, the young men to smoke, spit and look tough, and the young women to blush, giggle and make eyes at the train men.

Down on the main wagon road that led to Ackley, a short distance from the block tower, stood a big, roomy, farm house amid a grove of trees. A pleasant grass plot, broken with shrubs and flowers, stretched about the house among the trees. The place belonged to John Medford, one of the richest farmers in Grove Township. Oscar Phelps would often look longingly at the place as he rode past it on his wheel. It looked so cool and pleasant in contrast with the dusty road along which he was riding, and now and again he caught glimpses of a young girl who looked very attractive in her light cool gown as she moved about among the trees and flowers. Often he revolved in his mind, schemes for making her acquaintance, but, doubtless, they would not have answered his purpose so well as the chance which came to his assistance.

Riding down the road from Ackley one evening on his way to work, he turned a bend in the road and saw the young lady, Mildred Medford, standing by her bicycle and looking ruefully at a collapsing tire. Oscar took in the situation at a glance and, alighting form his wheel, bowed and said, "Excuse me, can I be of any assistance to you?"

"I am not certain," replied Mildred with a smile. "You can easily see what the trouble is."

"Yes, and of necessity I am prepared for such emergencies," said Oscar, as he examined the defective tire and found a small hole which he proceeded to mend, and then pumped up the tire.

While this was being done the young people introduced themselves, and by the time they were ready to ride on were fairly well acquainted. When they reached Mildred Medford's home, Oscar could not decline the invitation so pleasantly given to stop and rest for a time under the trees. He knew his stop must be short, but he would get the ice fairly broken for future calls, and he felt that he had when he rode away to his work ten minutes later. He went at his work that night with a lighter heart and more vim than he had felt for some time. When he would look over toward the big farm house a little bird sang in his heart for joy, and his little tower seemed brightened with a new light. But why should he feel any different tonight than on any other night? He stopped in his work to ask himself a question which the world's philosophers have been unable to answer.

When he rode by the house in the morning on his way to Ackley, he saw her standing among the flowers the fairest among them all, he thought, and his heart bounded when she noticed him with a smile and a nod. Quite often on his way to the tower, evenings, he would stop in front of the house and, leaning his wheel against a tree, go up the walk to a seat in a quiet shady spot where the breeze caused the trees and flowers to softly nod, and here he would find Mildred. He loved her from the first time he met her down by the turn in the road. She was so sweet, kind, and gentle; how could he help loving her? His soul was so full that it overflowed and filled his eyes and voice with a tenderness they had never known before. The youth had become a man.

It was not all plain sailing for Oscar, as he at first supposed it would be, for one night when he stopped in front of the house and leaned his wheel against the accustomed tree, he observed a team and carriage standing at the rack and, on going up the walk, found Mildred in conversation with a slim, dark complexioned young man with shifty eyes set back deep in his head, and a hollow voice like the echo from an old well. Mildred introduced him as Mr. Joseph Benton and, although the greeting of the two men was apparently friendly, their eyes spoke antagonism, even as their hands met.

Oscar learned afterwards that Joseph Benton had been absent for several years and was now stopping with his brother, whose farm joined the Medford farm on the west. Oscar did not linger long in Mildred's company that evening. He felt out of place; why, he could not have told, but one thing he was sure of, the grass was not as green, nor the shade as pleasant as usual, and he got away as soon as he reasonably could and was up at the tower half an hour earlier than was his custom. He told the day man he could go if he wished, and that gentleman thanked him and went.

Oscar watched the Medford home and after a time he saw Mildred come from the house in company with Joseph Benton, and getting into the carriage drive away. Then his heart filled with jealous rage and he resolved that he would never speak to Mildred again; he would treat her with supreme disdain, and kill Joseph Benton on the least provocation. After awhile that feeling wore away. He realized that Joseph Benton had the same right to love and court Mildred that he had, and that the main issue was who Mildred loved.

Mildred was not bound to him by any promise and, therefore, he had no cause for complaint with her. At the first opportunity he would tell her that he loved her, as though he had not told her a thousand times already with eyes and softened tone of voice.

The next evening when he called, Mildred's ten-year-old brother informed him, with a malicious note in his voice, that "Milly wasn't at home." He did not stop again for three or four evenings, until he saw Mildred in her favorite place under the trees. Twice during that interval he had seen Joseph Benton's carriage in front of the house, that gentleman evidently being determined to improve every opportunity. What little reserve he might have felt under Mildred's smile and, when he took the hand she held out to him in greeting, he yielded to his natural impetuosity and said, "Mildred, it's an age of torment since I saw you last. I love you and want you to marry me. Will you?"

"This is rather sudden, Mr. Phelps," she replied.

"The fact that you say it is sudden is proof to me that you expected me to declare myself sometime. It is yes, Milly?" and he drew her to him and slipped his arm about her waist.

"It is yes, if my parents consent. I would dislike to displease them," she said, but the latter part of the sentence was partly smothered by the kisses Oscar planted on her lips.

"There is nothing like completing a good work. I saw your father over by the orchard as I came in. Excuse me for a few moments," and he went out to where the old gentleman was and had his consent while most young men would have been thinking about it.

Mildred went in the house to tell her mother after he left, but she was by the gate awaiting his return, and she read his answer, even before he spoke. She walked nearly down to the tower with him. Oscar was ten minutes late, but the day man, who had witnessed the slow approach of the pair and the length of time it took to say good-bye, only smiled when Oscar made a lame excuse for being late.

A little later Oscar saw Joseph Benton drive by the tower on his way to the Medford home, but he gazed on him as would a victor on the vanquished, and regarded with indifference what a few days before would have annoyed him greatly.

Mildred told Joseph Benton that for certain reasons she could receive his attentions no longer, and he, realizing what those reasons were, drove away from the Medfords with his heart full of rage toward Oscar Phelps, and a determination that Oscar should never marry Mildred if he could find a way to prevent it, and he fully believed he could find a way.

Joseph desired to disgrace and injure Oscar so that he would be compelled to go elsewhere, but, at the same time, he did not intend that his part in the affair should be known. He made it his business to become acquainted with the day operator and visited him several times in the tower, learning in a casual way how the signals were operated, and that the maximum speed of freight trains must not exceed ten miles per hour, and that of passenger trains twenty miles per hour, when the block was clear. He had his plan laid to ditch the Chicago special on the B. & N., at the derailing switch; all that delayed him was lack of opportunity. Several times he had lingered in the darkness about the tower, hoping to find Oscar temporarily neglectful of his duty, but he had always met with disappointment.

By explanations of her lover, Mildred had also learned the working of the signals. It was the last days of August and, the superintendent having promised Oscar a place soon as agent out on the line with better pay, the young couple were to be married in a month.

There was a lawn party at Medford's one night and Joseph Benton was among those present. Joseph felt that if ever he was to make a move to ruin Oscar in time to prevent him marrying Mildred he must act at once. He had taken good care to keep the friendship of Billy Medford, Mildred's brother, and Billy could not understand why Milly preferred the society of Oscar, who hardly noticed him, to that of Joseph, who was so considerate of his wishes. From Billy, Joseph learned that after the Chicago Special had gone Oscar had permission to set the signals for clear on the W. W. & L. E., and to be absent from the tower and attend the party for the next two hours, as there would be nothing along on the B. & N. during that time. Joseph thought he saw a trap for Oscar. He did, but it was not one well covered by the trapper. He said, "Billy, I want you to help me play a joke on Oscar. Will you do it, and keep still about it afterwards?" He believed that after the damage was done, Billy would deny having any knowledge of what had been done, and he intended that other evidences of their guilt should be removed.

"Of course, I'll help you, if it won't hurt him," said Billy.

"Oh, it's nothing that will harm him; it will only make him feel cheap," replied Joseph.

"He needs taking down," said Billy, as he thought of how Oscar ignored him when he tried to linger around where Oscar and Mildred were, and wanted to join in their conversation.

"Wait here a moment," said Joseph, and he walked away. He came back in a moment with a large glass of lemonade with pieces of ice and lemon showing on the top, and a few drops of chloral scattered through the liquid that did not show.

"Take this up to the tower, Billy, and give it to Oscar, and tell him that Milly sent it," he said, as he handed Billy the glass.

"All right, but where does the joke come in? I want to know that," asked Billy.

"I'll tell you when you come back; hurry along now!" and Billy went.

Mildred had accidentally seen Billy leaving the grounds with the glass in his hand and, slipping down to the gate, she saw him by the light of the lamp at the head of the stairs go up into the office. She made up her mind to await his return and find out what he had been doing. She felt uneasy about the incident, why, she could not have told. It was several minutes before he came down the steps, and a few more before he came in at the gate.

"Billy, what have you been doing?" asked Mildred.

This question from his sister startled Billy into new life, for he was not aware that she was near.

"Nothing," was the boy's answer.

"William, I know better," said Mildred. She was growing severe. Billy started to go on, when she added, "You tell me what you were doing up at the tower, or I'll go to father."

William's attempt at retreat immediately closed. "What do you want to know for? You must think I was tryin' to kidnap that feller of yours, but I wouldn't have him if his pockets was full o' gold," said Billy, spitefully.

"Never mind, Billy, I want to know what you went up to the tower for," asked Mildred.

"To take that feller a glass o' lemonade," said Billy.

"Who sent you with it, did Mr. Benton?" asked Mildred.

"Yes, he did!" replied Billy.

"Why?" asked Mildred.

"Just to play a joke on him," replied Billy.

"Very well. You need not tell him that you told me what he had you do. I am going up to the tower myself. I am afraid of your having done something you will regret," and leaving Billy full of unknown fears, she hastened toward the tower.

Down the track she saw the headlight of the Chicago Special coming. No doubt Oscar would have an opportunity to laugh at her idle fears, but if all was right the train would be gone, and she consoled herself with the fact that she would have the pleasure of his company back to her home. The passenger train was passing the distance signal as she lightly mounted the stairs and stepped through the open door into the tower, where she met a sight she was hardly prepared to witness. Oscar sat in his chair, his arms folded on the table in front of him, and his head resting on his arms apparently in a deep sleep. Joseph Benton stood by the signal levers, and already he was lifting the one that controlled the home signal and derailing switch on the B. & N., intending, when the train was so close that it could not stop, to turn the lever and ditch the train, escaping in the confusion which would follow, and leave Oscar to bear the blame for the disaster. As he lifted the lever he heard a rustling sound behind him and, turning about, he saw Mildred Medford standing in the room.

Something of his plan entered her mind and stepping toward him, she said, "Joseph Benton, don't you dare do that!" and her hands closed firmly on the lever, and her eyes met his without quailing. In that instant while Benton's eyes shifted about uneasily under her direct look, and his mind was filled with indecision, the Chicago Special rattled merrily and safely over the crossing.

"From what Billy has told me, Oscar's condition, and your presence here, I understand what you were trying to do. You had better leave at once. The people may not be disposed to deal kindly with you when the truth is known, and I shall tell them," she said, as she released her grasp on the lever and stepped back.

"Tell them if you wish. I'll be gone where they can't reach me. Make a hero of that soft headed lover of yours if you desire. I wish you joy. Good night," and he was gone into the night.

Mildred was alarmed about Oscar for fear the drug he had received would prove fatal, but the imminent danger of the train had compelled her to neglect him for the time. As soon as Benton was gone she hastened to Oscar's side and tried to rouse him. Finding her efforts useless, with the means at hand, she ran home for aid, and was accompanied back by her father and several gentlemen, among them a physician from Ackley, who was at the party. Under his treatment Oscar soon revived, but it was several hours before he fully recovered from the effects of the drug.

Joseph Benton went away that night, and was not seen in the neighborhood again.

Oscar and Mildred were married in due time, and he now occupies a position of trust with the B. & N. Railway.

Mr. Kruger's Book

The first suggestion for ex-President Kruger's book came from J. F. Lehmann of Munich, who offered 500,000 marks. Mr. Kruger refused, saying he was only willing to work for his people not for his own ambition or for material interest when the war had taken a decisive turn. The second suggestion came not from a publisher but from Mr. Kruger's followers. Mr. Kruger consented, after much pressure, to dictate his views to his secretary, but refused a fee, and said he would apply all the profits to the suffering Boers. The German editor, who is very earnest in the matter, visited Mr. Kruger lately with a list of 150 questions in order to get the translation as accurate as possible and enlarge the original with authentic additions of the despatches from the late Cecil Rhodes to Miss Flora Shaw, which are used by Mr. Kruger as proof that Mr. Chamberlain was implicated in Jameson's raid.

At Auditorium—"Niobe."

THE HIGH ALPS.

Some Prefer to Climb Them in Winter.

An Englishman named Ryan made the first great ascension in the Alps this year. He started from Zermatt, in the famous valley of that name, on January 10 with three guides and returned two days later after having reached the summit of the Weissborn 4,800 feet above sea level.

The Weissborn is about twenty miles north of the still more formidable Matterhorn. This is the first time that the ascent of the Weissborn, one of the difficult mountains of the Alps, has been successfully carried out in winter.

No one attempted until within the last few years to make winter ascents of the Alps. Climbing in the winter season, however, has now become a favorite amusement among some of the most expert Alpinists, a few of whom say that they prefer to visit the Alps in the season when there are no amateur climbers on the ground.

Mr. Sella, the famous Italian photographer of Alpine views, has climbed the Matterhorn in the depth of the winter. To the expert Alpinist winter climbing is not much more difficult than summer work, for Arctic conditions, of course, prevail the year round.

In the winter, however, there is greater liability of being caught in severe storms and the snow work is more difficult. For this reason the type of snowshoes known as Norwegian ski are now used a great deal in the Alps as they help to obviate the greatest difficulties of winter mountaineering when the snow is deeper than in the summer months.

Zermatt is the starting point for many expeditions ta the higher Alps all around this little town. The Weisshorn is reached by travelling over snow and glaciers to the northwest of Zermatt, while parties starting from Monte Rosa travel about the same distance to the southeast.

Only a few weeks after Ryan's successful ascent of the Weisshorn a party of four gentlemen and four guides started from Zermatt to make a winter ascent of Monte Rosa. Two of the party, Walther Flender of Dusseldorf, Germany, and Mr. Koenig of Berne, fell into a crevasse about 100 feet deep and were instantly killed.

The party was travelling very swiftly over the snow on ski when the two victims suddenly disappeared from the view of their companions. They had dropped down a crevasse which, wide as it was, was concealed by a treacherous layer of snow that was not firm enough to bear their weight.

The body of young Flender was recovered, but that of Koenig was buried in a mass of snow and the six survivors were not able to dig it out. Flender was an expert mountaineer, who did most of his climbing without the aid of the guides. He had a passion for the Alps and knew this district thoroughly.

Montreal Bills

Montreal, Oct. 19.—In The Gazette of October 4 it was stated in the report relating to the discovery of counterfeit Bank of Montreal $5 notes that the spurious bills are numbered from 900,000 up, while in the bank's series of genuine bills the numbers only run up to 300,000. This latter statement, it is learned, is incorrect. The bank's issues run up to No. 400,000 for the present.

IN THE GOLD COMMISSIONER'S COURT OF THE YUKON TERRITORY.

Between

Joseph Nucci, J. P. O'Connor, Giovanni Lafazie, Felix Donatelli, Innocenze Bucci, Franz Luigi, W. Presspriek and W. A. Croll,

Plaintiffs,

and

N. C. Woodring, Robert R. Campbell, Louis Williams, Edward Erickson, D. Lewis Corcoran, Joseph Boorman, Frank Gleason, Hugh F. MacKinnon, Fred Whitman, John R. D. Sinclair, William D. Wilson, David Wilson, Carrie J. Lowe, Rose Perry, Charles Williams, Michael Dooley, Beatrice Wilson, Edward Juhl, Robert Beechler, John H. Lamb, Albert Lodge, Joseph Notti, Herbert Plumb, Joseph Stein, J. Hellwinkle, C. Young, W. J. Elliott, A. J. Nelson, J. T. Cosgriff, C. Pusoneault, A. F. Stowe, Lugi Raineri, B. Pinchetti, John Irwin, James Fraser, W. Furnival, George Fleeder, J. Lawrence, L. Flennry, T. B. Kennedy, A. M. Campbell, J. S. Houser, H. S. Smith, F. Gayno, W. A. Black and J. J. Mahon,

Defendants.

To the above named defendants:—

TAKE NOTICE that a protest has been entered with the Gold Commissioner of the Yukon Territory by the above named plaintiffs for the cancellation of your applications for a grant to creek placer mining claim No. 4 below Discovery on Lovett Gulch in the Yukon Territory.

AND TAKE NOTICE that in pursuance of an order of the said Gold Commissioner dated the 27th day of November, 1902, you are required to attend before him at his office at Dawson, on Wednesday, the 17th day of December, 1902, at the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon, with such evidence as you may see fit, at which time and place the said protest will be heard, and in the event of your absence the plaintiffs will be heard and judgment given.

Dated this 28th day of November, A. D. 1902.

Joseph Nucci, J. P. O'Connor, Giovanni Lafazie, Felix Donatelli, Innocenze Bucci, Franz Luigi, W. Presspriek and W. A. Croll,

Plaintiffs in person whose address for service is at the office of Leroy Tozier, Monte Carlo Building, First Avenue, Dawson, Y. T.

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