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BEYOND RECALL.

I am an average sort of man, but I once had more than my average share of misfortune.

Like the ordinary young man of the period, I indulged in flirtations, some airy, some grave, with various young ladies, who from time to time took my errant fancy. Most of these perfectly understood my altogether unintending attentions, know in fact as much of "Cupid's First Primer" as I did myself. But alas! among them was one who did not understand the rules of the somewhat delicate game. A speaking glance with her carried the value of an avowed declaration; a tender headsqueeze meant "asking papa," while anything yet more caressing almost amounted to naming the day.

I found out this lamentable ignorance, and promptly withdrew from Miss Matilda Pointcome's society before it should be too late, for I would not have willingly hurt the feelings of a fly, far less those of a pretty girl!

Thus far the record of my youthful follies. Very soon after the above little episode I became a changed character, having fallen deeply and truly in love with a certain Miss Dare, and being convinced that there was something better in life than the frivolity I had hitherto indulged in. Not for worlds would I have "flirted" with Julia Dare; the matter was far too serious. I determined to propose and by letter, as being the easier method; for, though bold enough with others, I was no better than a bashful school-boy where she was concerned.

Accordingly one evening I hurried home with a fixed resolve to put my fate to the touch without further delay. Paper and pens lay before me, and I was just about to begin when a letter arrived in a strange handwriting (a woman's undeniably). Was it? Could it be? Absurd. Why should she write to me? I tore it open and looked for the signature—Matilda Pointcome!

"What the deuce does she want?" I ejaculated.

It was an extremely decisive, slightly dictatorial note requesting an explanation of my prolonged absence after such pronounced (!) attentions, and demanding whether rumor spoke truly in assigning me to another lady. I laid it down rather gravely. Some day I would tell Julia all about it. Really I wasn't to blame for the girl's foolishness, yet somehow I felt rather mean about it.

"Wanting in good breeding and delicacy?" Yes, undoubtedly she was, but perhaps I had been a little wanting in some things too! Then once more I essayed to write my love-letter. I believe, without being conceited, that I really produced a very touching composition. I took pains with the caligraphy too—just one or two blurred words to testify to the depth of my emotion, and the rest as fair as copper-plate. I was in the act of folding the all-important missive when my friend, Fred Easy, came in. Scrambling my writing materials together somewhat sheepishly, I turned to greet him.

"Hullo, old fellow!" cried he, "you look warm" (no doubt I did), "had a row with your landlady or—"

"No row at all, only rather a big fire and I sat over it—reading."

"H'm," with a glance at the dying embers (it was a warm April evening) and the folded newspaper.

We smoked a pipe and had a chat together, then Fred took his leave. It wanted just three minutes to post-time. I made a frantic dash after my letter; it should go that night. I could bear no more suspense. I put it into an envelope, fastened, directed, and stamped it; then snatched my hat and dashed off to the pillar box round the corner, arriving there one second before the "man of letters."

Home again; I felt easier now that the Rubicon was fairly crossed, and, ringing for my frugal supper, proceeded to gather up my writing materials.

"Ah, that note; better burn it." Some impulse seized me. I would read it once more. O powers of all sorts! my own letter to Julia and—the other note was gone!—gone!—gone to her! Yes, I had folded my letter—I remembered it all then—just at the instant my friend entered.

I rushed out like a madman, but alas! I knew that the box was cleared, and not a vestige of a letter carrier could I see anywhere. I ran all the way to the nearest Post Office, only to be stared at as if I had been a lunatic, and coldly told that the N—Road pillar box was not in that district. I rushed out again, and, seeing in the distance a man with a post-bag, flew after him. But my excited incoherent demands attracted the attention of a passing policeman who sternly told me to stop that, or I must come along with him.

I fled once more to the other neighboring Post Office. Frantically I dashed into the shop.

"Could I possibly have a letter back which I—posted by mistake—N—Road pillar—most important. I will pay."

"Now then, young man, we understand all about that little game of yours. Won't do here, I tell you."

"What do you mean? I—I—I tell you I made a mistake,"

A derisive smile passed over the man's face; a suppressed titter ran round the shop. I rushed forth once more, home this time, arriving there just as my landlady was about to enquire for me at the very place the "bobby" had threatened to convey me to—viz: the Police Station.

I never closed my eyes that night. I thought of drowning myself, but—it seemed vulgar; of charcoal—but I had none; of pistols—but I didn't want to rouse the neighbors.

A week later I sailed for Zululand, and for over five years remained hidden there, hearing nothing of Julia.

Then, I couldn't stand it any longer, and came back. Doubtless she was married long since, but I should like to—well, to know the worst.