

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE GAME.

After the first day's work in his new territory Ward felt discouraged. His new policy of persistence had not gotten him the orders he had been expecting. He had covered two towns by doubling back and was now only twenty miles from home; but his thoughts were not of home.

After supper the hotel clerk handed him a letter addressed in Bertha's handwriting. He was surprised. Why had she written so soon? Was anything wrong?

Yes, something was wrong. He had in some way disappointed her. The letter was rather vague and he could only guess what she was driving at, but a few moment's reflection convinced him that his unconscious indifference and probably his attentions to Hilda West had been taken as a slight. Come to think of it, he *had* omitted to speak about their engagement. But a fellow couldn't keep everything on his mind, especially when visiting home for only part of a day.

Already his thoughts were of himself. He began inventing excuses for W. Clark, Jr. Truly, girls expected much of a man. They did not know what it was to be a drummer, harassed from daylight till dark with the worries of travel and salesmanship. They would have a fellow carry an extra suit-case containing an enlarged photograph of the beloved.