

Case of Potter vs. Cupid

By G. L. Redmond

ONE spring a queer thing happened in Dayton. It happened the day that Effie Potter went into Miller & Richards' general store to buy a pair of rubbers.

In rubbers Effie took a small three. Mr. Smith, who clerked in Miller & Richards', knew this instinctively; it is the size all women take. But in order to find how much room she needed in a small three he had to get down on his knees and tug at the rubbers and grow red in the face, and get up and go away and bring other small threes a little larger, with the number smudged out, and try them on; and keep on like that until he found a small three that would do. Then, still kneeling, he leaned back on his heels and looked triumphantly up at Effie. By the strangest coincidence she was looking straight down at him, and like a flash he discovered—this is the queer thing I spoke of—discovered that she had blue eyes.

Mind you! blue eyes! He had known all along that she had eyes, of some kind, at least he had suspected it; but blue eyes! It was his favorite color. He decided right there that it was his favorite color. It flustered him so to think that Effie had blue eyes, that he could hardly make change. As soon as he was alone he had to hurry to the back of the store and gaze at himself in a mirror steadily for five minutes before he could go back to work.

Effie went straight home and told her mother that she didn't see how a young man of Mr. Smith's ability could be persuaded to stay in a little town like Dayton. He was so earnest, and took such an interest in politics. Mr. Smith had remarked, while tugging at the rubbers, that if the government really wanted to save the country from ruin, the sooner they abolished these mail order houses the better.

Mrs. Potter looked dubious. Her plans for Effie did not include Mr. Smith; they included young Dr. Robinson. The Doctor drank a little, but you'd never know it unless you were told. Mrs. Potter herself had seen to it that a good many were told, but that was when the Doctor was going with that Jones girl.

She referred to him then as "that drunken sot. It's queer, though, how you can be so mistaken in people. Now that the Doctor was beginning to frequent the Potter home on Sunday evenings, at Mrs. Potter's request, it turned out that he was only a very moderate drinker after all. Took it for his nerves. You know how doctors are troubled with their nerves.

Of course Mr. Smith was a nice young man and all that, but—Mrs. Potter left that "but" sticking there. It was really more significant that way than if she had finished the sentence. The truth is that Mrs. Potter for some time past had been privately rehearsing such speeches as "My daughter, Mrs. Dr. Robinson, is spending the winter in California," or, "My daughter, the Doctor's wife you know, is motoring to the city next week in her new car." The thought of having to forget these and learn a new set like "My daughter, Mrs. Smith, is nursing twins," or, "My daughter, Mrs. Smith, is prepared to do plain sewing at reasonable rates" was too much for mother Potter. She made it clear to Effie that Mr. Smith was not to be encouraged; so Effie did all in her power to encourage the young man.

Effie was a Methodist, and sang in the Methodist choir. Mr. Smith was a Presbyterian. The reason that Miller & Richards hired a clerk who was a Presbyterian, was because they were both Methodists. Of course you can see the significance of that. You can't! Well, you blockhead.

Mr. Smith began to attend the Methodist church. This made talk of course, and Miller & Richards began to speak vaguely of cutting down expenses by reducing the staff; but these things did not deter Mr. Smith. He kept on going to the Methodist church, and sat in places where he could get a good view of the choir loft, and yet appear to be listening to the sermon. Effie too seemed interested in the sermon. Only occasionally, and as if by accident, her eyes would rest on Mr. Smith for a moment and then flutter away again so quickly

that Mr. Smith really couldn't be sure whether she had looked at him at all or not. It was the most tantalizing thing.

But fleeting as these glances were, they did not escape the eagle eye of mother Potter. She took Effie out of the choir. People said it was a shame the way Mrs. Potter was carrying on about Effie, but they were glad to have something to talk about just the same; it had been a dull winter in Dayton.

Imagine the joys of these gossips when, after Effie had been taken from the choir, it turned out that Mr. Smith was eligible for a place in it. He knew the leader well, had lent him money in fact; that made him eligible. But a Presbyterian

in the Methodist choir! It was a precedent in Dayton. People said, love will find a way.

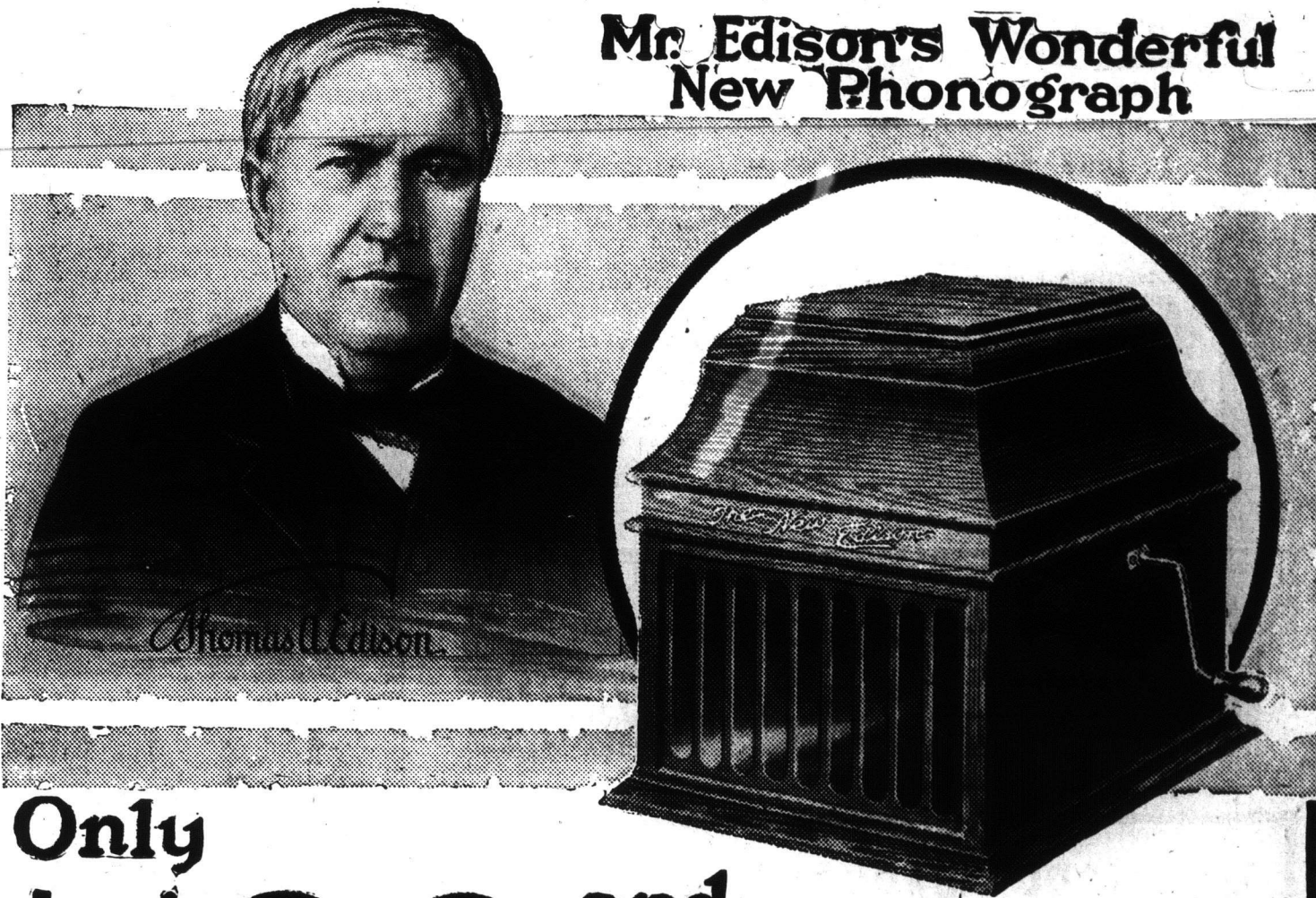
So the burning glances continued to shuttlecock back and forth past the minister's bald head, without ever warming him up or getting into his sermons in any noticeable way. Mrs. Potter looked daggers, but where Effie was concerned Mr. Smith scorned daggers—that kind of daggers.

The young couple began to have stolen interviews, when they told each other that the course of true love never did run smooth, when they clung passionately to each other and said that nothing should ever come between them. It looked reasonable, too, if they always kept that close together. They sat together in the moonlight and said, wasn't it queer how, in such a big world, people who were in-

tended for each other always met just at the right time, and wasn't it queer how so many married people seemed to quit being happy after a while; they never intended to quit. It was just like a chapter out of a novel.

Meanwhile Mrs. Potter kept on discouraging the affair until she had it just about discouraged into an elopement; and then Mrs. Potter's sister in Brandon took sick and Mrs. Potter had to go over and take care of her. There was a trained nurse in attendance, but land sakes! what good is a trained nurse when there's anybody really sick around? A trained nurse don't know how to do anything, only charge like the mischief. It's a caution, the money those trained nurses ask for just puttering around with their charts and thermometers and that kind of truck. Charts, huh!

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