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**John M. Scott General Passenger Agent  
Portland, Oregon**

# That Letter

By HUDSON C. EASTON

I had been for some time devoted to Eleanor. I had received such encouragement as to lead me to believe that if I proposed to her I would be accepted. But my mind was not definitely made up. A man is not likely to come to a conclusion in the matter of marriage unless some great advantage is to be gained or he is madly in love. The first may not always decide him, but the latter will. In my case there was no especial advantage to be gained, and I had drifted so gently into love that I was unaware that I had got there.

I called one evening and found Eleanor smiling at some cut flowers. Who had any business to be sending her flowers? The corners of my mouth went down, my nostrils dilated, a color came into my cheek and a spark into my eye. I was about to say something disagreeable when I remembered that there was no contract between Eleanor and me whatever. She might receive flowers from Old Nick if she liked.

So I recovered myself sufficiently to make it appear that I was indifferent. When she saw that I would not ask from whom the gift came she told me that Hathaway had sent them. Hathaway was a newcomer in the place, was good looking, dressed well, and all the girls sat up and took notice of him. I damned him with faint praise, made my call very short and went to my room uneasy. It occurred to me that sometimes these affairs between the sexes come about very suddenly. When a fellow sends a girl flowers it may be a sign that he is getting ready to propose.

Sunday afternoon I had been accustomed to spend with Eleanor. I determined that the next Sunday afternoon I would endeavor to find out how far the affair between her and Hathaway had gone. Usually when I called the maid ushered me into the drawing room. This Sunday I was shown into the library. There was a writing desk there, and a letter addressed and stamped lay on it. I glanced at the superscription and saw that it was for Hathaway and the writing was Eleanor's.

Evidently the affair had gone much faster and much further than might have been expected. I wondered if the letter were not an acceptance of a proposal. It is said that a raw recruit will become panic stricken at the first sound of a gun. A lover is naturally a coward, and I was no exception to the rule. I trembled, I paced back and forth in a great dread, now and again looking at the letter, which lay on the desk mocking me. I could scarcely refrain from taking it up and throwing it in the fire that blazed merrily on the hearth.

Presently Eleanor came in. She seemed a bit annoyed at seeing her letter on the desk and said:

"It was so cold this morning that instead of writing in my room I wrote here, where it is warm."

Leaving her letter where it lay, she took a seat before the fire and began to chat about the weather. I sat down on a sofa a trifle further than she from the blaze, for my cheeks were warm enough already. I tried to say something, but that confounded letter to Hathaway stared me in the face and tongue tied me. If I said anything it was disconnected and irrelevant. Eleanor did not share in my embarrassment. She was evidently enjoying the genial warmth, not appearing to care whether I talked, talked disconnectedly or did not talk at all.

I was badly rattled. I wanted to get in a proposal before that letter was posted. Had I retained my equanimity I would have felt assured that if Eleanor had received a proposal from Hathaway and had replied to it favorably anything I could say would not be likely to alter her decision. If she had replied in the negative there was nothing to do in the premises. But I was in no condition of mind to make a proposal. Proposals, except where they are a mere matter of form or at a venture, come from the heart. The lady is sympathetic, coos, and the man feels something welling up in his bosom that comes out in a declaration. But I was disgruntled and Eleanor didn't coo. I couldn't propose. After spending half an hour in this fashion I arose to go.

"Would you mind posting a letter for me?" asked Eleanor in an indifferent tone.

"This was too much. 'Yes,' I said, 'I would mind posting a letter which I have reason to believe is a reply to an offer. This man Hathaway's attentions to you have been perfectly plain. I, who have been long devoted to you, have been suddenly thrust aside!'"

But enough. The ice was broken. Eleanor soothed me. I went on throwing off a lot of senseless talk—love talk, such as lovers have spoken from time immemorial and which, were it coherent, would not be love. Eleanor gave way before it, and instead of leaving her disgruntled I remained till 11 o'clock that night, finally departing engaged.

Some time after our marriage I found the letter to Hathaway pigeonholed. I took it to my wife and asked her if I might read it. She gave me a smiling permission. I opened it and took out a sheet of blank paper. I looked at her surprised.

"If I hadn't done it," she said, "you'd never have proposed."

Biddy Takes the Trip



Mother—Joe, why do you suppose that old hen persists in faying in the coal bin?

Joe—Why mother, I think she has seen the sign. "Now is the time to lay in your coal?"—Philadelphia Press.

## BEST LOTS FOR SALE.

Why, what are they, black mud or adobe? No. Some hill top? No. Oh, some side hill proposition, I suppose. Say will you please read the heading again before the next guess? **Best Lots.** Oh, is your lot in West Roseburg this side of the State Soldiers' Home on that nice level tract of free river bottom on Harvard Avenue? Sure, and its nicely platted into lots 50x100 and an iron-clad title of warranty deed and abstract goes with each lot. Terms as you desire. See me or phone 212-L. C. D. Maynard, owner. Password, "Investment."

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d12 CHARLES AUER.

## TRAPPERS.

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B. F. SHIELDS,  
Box 601, Roseburg, Ore



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