

The Trail of a Valentine

By HOWARD FIELDING

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It was a surprise to Mr. Bailey that the office of a detective agency should present an aspect so wholesome and so ordinary. He had pictured it a shabby den of tricksters whose trade was deservedly ill paid, and he had come upon an impulse wholly at variance with the usual currents of his life, dreading to be seen on such an errand and slinking in at the street door in the manner of a man who makes his first distressful visit to a pawn shop.

Mr. Bailey was one of those men in whose knowledge of life there are blank spaces. In his case those gaps were due to obstinacy. When he had a prejudice against a person, a place or an occupation he seemed deliberately to cultivate ignorance and to shun information, as if upon a scruple of conscience. Because of this peculiarity his notion of a detective's share in the world's activities had become constantly more absurd from the day when he first attempted to dissuade a certain young man from choosing that profession. To this young man he had now come as a client, surely at the spur of no small need.

Upon the receipt of Mr. Bailey's card Harley Bertrand dropped a half read letter and made all haste to usher in his visitor. The obvious sincerity of the welcome went far to relieve Mr. Bailey of embarrassment, and the businesslike appearance of the inner office helped still further to put him at his ease.

"Harley," said he, somewhat in the manner of the old days when he was legal guardian to Bertrand and distant affectionate—"Harley, I'm glad to see you so well situated. You must be getting on."

"Pretty well, I thank you, Uncle John," responded Bertrand. "And how is it with you? At least you've grown no older in the year since I've seen you."

"It needn't have been so long," said Bailey. "I'm afraid you took our differences too much to heart and thought that I—er— Well, you might have known that I didn't want you to stop coming to the house."

"It's very kind of you to say so," said Bailey. "I'm frank and outspoken," continued Bailey defensively, "and I don't like your occupation. That's a fact that can't be altered, but we needn't quarrel about it. We'll be debarred from that in future anyway, because I've come to consult you professionally, which may seem to put me out of the argument."

"Unless I fail to help you," said Bertrand.

"Well, I'm bound to admit that if you fail I can't blame you," responded Bailey. "I'm prepared to hear you say at



"I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU SO WELL SITUATED," once that the thing is impossible. It's a matter of some delicacy and one that I couldn't discuss with a stranger."

Bertrand looked dubiously across the desk at the white haired, ruddy old man, who was beginning with nervous fingers to unloose the cord around a square, thin packet. When the wrappings were removed there appeared a frame of white cardboard with a design in colors and gilt inclosing a photograph which upon inspection proved to be a reproduction of a detail from a painting of Chartran's, a Brittany peasant girl holding a bridal veil in her hands.

"This thing seems to be a valentine," said the detective, "if one may judge by the design upon the frame."

"That's what it is," responded Bailey. "And a fine one, as you'll admit. My daughter got it by mail yesterday, and I want you to find out who sent it."

Bertrand's mouth and eyes expressed a painful amazement.

"This is indeed a— a somewhat delicate matter, as you intimated," he said. "May I ask whether Charlotte has expressed a wish that I should do this? Doesn't she know who sent it?"

"She says she doesn't."

"I shall ask for no further evidence on that point," responded Bertrand. "But there was another question—"

"No. She hasn't expressed a wish

that you should investigate this matter. She doesn't know that it is being investigated. But I am doing only my plain duty in trying to find out whether this is the beginning of further attentions on the part of young Steve Temple. I knew his father for a rascal; I know the son for another. I sent him about his business once, and I am prepared to do it again."

"Pardon me for saying that I think you took too serious a view of this matter a year ago," said Bertrand, with hesitation. "I did not believe at that time that Charlotte felt any deeper sentiment than a certain natural recognition of the fact that Temple is a very handsome fellow. He has the gift of fascination."

"He has the gift of all the vices that disgrace humanity," said Bailey, with decision. "He inherited them. But this is not prejudice on my part. I looked him up. I know him to the backbone."

"What reason have you for supposing that Temple sent this?"

"It looks foreign to me, and he's been abroad. He has just got back. No other young man of Charlotte's acquaintance has been across the water. I think Temple bought this on the other side and brought it over with him."

Bertrand examined the frame.

"The anatomy of these Cupids suggests Germany surely," said he.

"Temple's been there," said Bailey.

There was a plain, thin sheet of paper which was folded like a cover protecting the frame and the photograph. Bertrand held it up to the light and pointed out to Bailey two letters, "E. G.," unmistakably German.

"That's evidence," declared Bailey; "but, of course, it doesn't really prove anything. I can't open my mouth without having something more definite. But how to get it? This valentine was mailed in this city. I saw the postmark on the envelope. But there's no way of finding out who mailed it. The address was typewritten."

Bertrand spent half a minute in meditation, rubbing his yellow hair into a strange tangle meanwhile. Then he slowly walked to the steam radiator in the corner and laid the valentine upon it.

"There is another point," said he. "You may remember that about a year ago your cousin, Mrs. Ewing, was visiting you just after returning from abroad. She had a photographic reproduction of the picture of which we have here a detail. Charlotte cared very little for the picture as a whole, but she admired this particular figure."

"I remember," said Bailey. "She tried to find a large photograph of the painting in this city, but couldn't. It is the likeliest thing in the world that she told Temple and that he found this somewhere in Europe."

"My excellent alleged uncle," said Bertrand, smiling, "there is no difficulty at all in the matter. Barring the luck which may defeat the invisible, nullify certainties and—to all intents and purposes, for you and me—prevent the sun from rising tomorrow I will show you the way to obtain positive proof as to who sent this valentine, and I'll do it without rising from my chair."

"Now, then, in the first place, we'll consult the valentine itself. How was it made?"

"Bless your soul!" cried Bailey. "I don't know anything about the technical details of getting up such a thing."

"You can see, however, that it never was made to hold this photograph. There's nothing to hold it. It's pasted on, and very crudely. Didn't that strike your eye? See how neatly all the rest of it is got up. Contrast that with the pasting. What do you make of it?"

"Well, I don't know; really, I don't know," repeated Bailey, alternately peering at the back of the valentine and at the face of the detective.

"There was another picture here originally," said Bertrand. "It was attached in a different way from this one. The frame was made in two parts, back and front. The picture was laid between them, and they were glued together. If you look closely you can see that that picture was cut out with the sharp point of a penknife probably, and then this one was affixed to the back so that it shows all right from the other side. It was done very recently, long after the original valentine was made."

"Eh?" said Bailey. "How do you know that?"

"The paste is not thoroughly dry. The heat of the radiator has wrinkled the edges of the photograph even with only a few minutes' trial. But the heat has had no effect upon the older portion."

"If the man had bought the picture and the frame abroad he would have done this work long ago. Indeed, with so much time at his disposal he probably would have had some more skillful workman do it for him. I infer that the idea of sending this picture as a valentine came to him suddenly at the last moment and that he hunted through the stores for a frame that would fit it. That means that the frames were imported by some firm in this country, most probably in this city. There are only a very few of that line of business. It will take only a little while to talk to them."

This task Bertrand delegated to an assistant, who within twenty minutes gave him the name of the one importing the valentines of which the frame in question was a part and a list of nine stores where they were sold in Astoria.

"But the clerk won't remember," objected Bailey. "In the rush of this onetime business how will a salesman be able to tell who bought one of these things? Probably a dozen or more

were sold."

"Our particular purchaser," said Bertrand, "was looking not merely for a pretty valentine, but for one into which this photograph could be fitted. Undoubtedly he carried the photograph with him and told the salesman who he was hunting for. That will fix the purchaser in the salesman's memory. At any rate, we'll try."

He called up four of the stores without result, but from the fifth he obtained a favorable reply.

"They have sent for the salesgirl," said Bertrand. "Suppose you speak with her." And Bailey, who was already leaning across the desk, snatched the telephone eagerly.

"Hello!" he cried after a brief interval of impatience. "Hello! Are you the young lady who sold a valentine to a man who wanted to paste a photograph into it? . . . What did he look like? . . . Very handsome? Yes. Go on. . . . Light hair and blue eyes. . . . You say he didn't have any mustache or beard. What? Spell



"HARLEY! GOOD HEAVENS!"

it. . . . Swell, eh? How big was he? . . . Very tall. Over six feet. Anything more that you remember?"

There was a pause, and then Bailey turned to the detective with an acid grin.

"What eyes these silly girls have! She says he wore a dark green necktie." Then to the telephone, "Thank you—thank you very much." And again to Bertrand, after hanging up the receiver: "Well, that settles it, and you have done a great piece of work for me. It's Temple beyond a doubt. He must have shaved off his mustache. Otherwise it's the man to the life. I can foresee another painful interview with that young scamp."

"It occurs to me," said Bertrand thoughtfully, "that perhaps— But I have no right to advise in such a matter."

"Yes, you have," responded Bailey. "Go right ahead. I've got some new ideas about the value of your advice. Let's have it, my dear boy."

"I am in a fair way of business here," said Bertrand, looking around the office. "My income seems well assured, and besides I have made fortunate investments. My little property which you managed so well when I was a boy has grown more rapidly than you would readily believe."

"I'm glad to hear it, my dear fellow. But what the deuce has this to do with—"

"It is in my mind that if I might see Charlotte and speak to her as my heart would prompt me—"

There was a long silence, the two men looking intently into each other's eyes. Then Bailey suddenly stretched out his hand.

"I thought of this years ago, Harley," said he, "when you were a lad and she a child at my knee. I thought of it many times afterward, but somehow of late our ways have not lain together. But—but I feel differently today. Perhaps I've been a fool."

"You do yourself a great injustice, uncle," responded Bertrand, with a smile. "Your intellectual powers may not perfectly fit you for the detective's profession, but—"

"Don't crow over me, my boy," exclaimed Bailey. "Do you know I think I should have worked this problem out just as you did if I'd really set my mind to it? It looks very simple."

Bertrand shook his head.

"No, uncle, no," said he. "By one detail of this affair I see clearly that you weren't cut out for a detective. Your inferences are swayed by previous opinion, not by the reasonable probabilities." He checked a remonstrance with a wave of his hand. "Let us illustrate. The essence of this case, it seems to me, was that Charlotte had expressed a desire for a certain picture, which was subsequently sent to her anonymously. Now, there are two tall men with light hair and blue eyes, one wearing a mustache the last time he was seen, the other always smooth shaven. The man wanted in this case is described by an eyewitness as having no hair upon his face. Moreover, a dark green necktie is mentioned, and at this very moment one of our tall, light men is wearing such a tie. Again, we know positively that Charlotte mentioned her desire for this picture to one of these men, and we only guess that she may have spoken of it to the other."

"Yet despite all these indications you persist in believing that the man who is not known to have shaved off his mustache or to have worn a dark green tie or ever to have heard that Charlotte admired a certain picture is the one who sent that valentine. Can you wonder, then, that I hold you for a very bad detective?"

"Harley! Good heavens! Do you mean?"

"Certainly, uncle. I sent that valentine to Charlotte myself. We had a talk about it by telephone while you were on your way to this office. She called me up on suspicion, to use the language of my craft. And some words she said to me in thanking me for my little remembrance raised my hope that you need think no more of Stephen Temple."

Saved His Comrade's Life.

"While returning from the Grand Army Encampment at Washington City, a comrade from Elgin, Ill., was taken with cholera morbus and was in a critical condition," says Mr. J. E. Houghland, of Eldon, Iowa. "I gave him Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy and believe saved his life. I have been engaged for ten years in immigration work and conducted many parties to the south and west. I always carry this remedy and have used it successfully on many occasions." Sold by Frank Hart, leading druggist.

SHAVE WITH HOT STEEL.

An Old Cutler's Advice to Men Who Use a Razor.

"Whenever I hone a razor," said an old English cutler, "I always give some advice with it, free, gratis, and I take great satisfaction in knowing that I have made shaving easier and more comfortable for more than 10,000 men. Almost every barber will tell you how to strop a razor, but it takes a cutler to tell you how to care for your strop and how to get the best work out of your blade."

"A swing strop, canvass on one side and horse hide on the other, is the best. Always hold it taut and draw the razor lightly, but swiftly, from heel to point. If you let the strop sag you will put a round edge on your blade. Don't forget to cover your strop or put it away in a drawer after using. If it hangs in a bathroom near a window the dust and grime get into it and soon take the edge from your razor. Whether you keep the strop covered or whether you don't, rub your open hand over the two surfaces to free it from dust."

"But what I consider my most valuable advice is how to do away with shaving paper entirely and at the same time improve the cutting quality of the razor's edge. Nine men out of ten shave themselves in a room where there is running hot water. Now, the way to get a most gratifying result is this: Lather thickly and well and let it remain on the face half a minute before you begin to shave. If you have time wash it off, for with it will come the grit and dirt that you have loosened up in the pores of the skin, and then apply a second coat. It will be as soft, smooth and clean as new velvet."

"Now turn on the hot water faucet and let it run. Hold the razor under the stream until it is heated. Then take a slanting, or diagonal, stroke, like a farmer does with a scythe, not a square pull, and you will be amazed to find how beautifully and easily the hot blade cuts the beard."

"When it is filled with lather hold it under the running hot water instead of using shaving paper. This will wash off the lather and at the same time heat the blade again. Don't be afraid of taking out the temper. That would be impossible if you put the razor in a kettle and boiled it. Try the hot blade and you'll never shave with the cold steel again."—New York World.

A Word of Warning



Don't buy substitutes for Mennen's Borated Talcum Powder. "Just as good" is only a deceit by which a dealer tries to make money out of the superiority and success of Mennen's Powder. There's nothing just as good as Mennen's and users of substitutes and imitations risk skin, complexion and comfort in doing so.

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Europe is turning to America for ideas in building hotels.

SWEDISH THIEF.

Immigrant Arrested at Ellis Island for Stealing Employer's Money.

NEW YORK, July 26.—Samuel Schrockwisky, a Swede, a former resident of Ladkoeping, Sweden, was arrested yesterday at Ellis Island where he had been landed from the steamer Carmania, which arrived last night on charges of having fled from his native city with a large amount of money not his own. Later the prisoner was committed to the Tombs prison by the United States Commissioners, to await Swedish extradition papers. When arrested Schrockwisky had \$1275 in his pockets in American money. It is alleged that Schrockwisky, who was employed as a clerk by a clothing merchant in Ladkoeping, sold stock of the store and decamped with the proceeds while the owner was absent.

INTERESTING LETTER

WRITTEN BY A NOTABLE WOMAN

Mrs. Sarah Kellogg of Denver, Color Bearer of the Woman's Relief Corps Sends Thanks to Mrs. Pinkham.



"The following letter was written by Mrs. Kellogg, of 1628 Lincoln Ave., Denver, Col., to Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass.: Dear Mrs. Pinkham: For five years I was troubled with a tumor, which kept growing, causing me intense agony and great mental depression. I was unable to attend to my house work, and life became a burden to me. I was confined for days to my bed, lost my appetite, my courage and all hope. I could not bear to think of an operation, and in my distress I tried every remedy which I thought would be of any use to me, and reading of the trial of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to sick women decided to give it a trial. I felt so discouraged that I had little hope of recovery, and when I began to feel better, after the second week, thought it only meant temporary relief; but to my great surprise I found that I kept gaining, while the tumor lessened in size."

"The Compound continued to build up my general health and the tumor seemed to be absorbed, until, in seven months, the tumor was entirely gone and I well woman. I am so thankful for my recovery that I ask you to publish my letter in newspapers, so other women may know of the wonderful curative powers of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."

When women are troubled with irregular or painful periods, weakness, displacement or ulceration of the female organs, that bearing-down feeling, inflammation, backache, flatulence, general debility, indigestion or nervous prostration, they should remember there is one tried and true remedy, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound at once removes such troubles.

No other medicine in the world has received such widespread and unqualified endorsement. No other medicine has such a record of cures of female ills.

Mrs. Pinkham invites all sick women to write her for advice. She is daughter-in-law of Lydia E. Pinkham and for twenty-five years under her direction and since her decease has been advising sick women free of charge. She has guided thousands to health. Address, Lynn, Mass.

Remember that it is Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound that is curing women, and don't allow any druggist to sell you anything else in its place.

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