

Professor and Dead Letter

By NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE

Belinda's introduction to the new professor was a distinctly unceremonious one. Tripping lightly across the mud sogged pavement, she suddenly caught one foot in a tangled heap of wire—hung down from the telephone and telegraph lines by the ravaging hand of a recent hurricane—and stumbled precipitately into the arms of a blond giant, who supported her valorously till she had blushing recovered her poise.

"Thanks, awfully," she said. "You have doubtless saved my life."
"Your frock, more likely," he replied, lifting his hat. "I am no end glad I happened along at the propitious moment."

Belinda returned him a little combination smile and nod as she lifted her dainty, crisp skirts and pursued her way cautiously across the slippery street.

Hardiman restrained his eagerness until a reasonably safe length of time had elapsed before turning to look around. He had gained the opposite sidewalk by this time, and his glance back at the girl betrayed instantly to the casual pedestrians that the professor had been abruptly shaken from his phlegmatic attitude of mind.

Belinda turned into Oak street all unconscious of the scrutiny that fol-

lowed her, and Hardiman continued his way in a tumult of chaotic reflections. He reached his hotel in a state of mind that was quite impossible. The very first look into the girl's face had thrilled him startlingly. The accidental contact of her delicate form against his had finished the job. He told himself that it was a case of love at first sight. So much for the explosion of his lifelong theories! Then a perfect regiment of doubts and fears assailed him. Perhaps, after all, she was not a girl, but a married woman.

The professor ate his dinner in silence. Afterward he went to his room and for some inexplicable reason exchanged his dark suit for one of lighter and more becoming texture. He brushed his hair painstakingly, placed a soft gray alpaca hat on his head and sauntered forth in quest of—fresh air. It was almost dark before he returned, disappointed and oddly depressed.

Meanwhile Belinda had reached home, put on a pair of dry boots and settled herself for a quiet afternoon. School would open on Monday, and she would not have many more afternoons to lounge, as they would be given over to outdoor recreation after the trying hours of the morning. The town clock, striking 6, aroused her. She tore up the last letter—old love letters they were—and tossed the bits into the grate. Then she made a careful toilet and went downstairs to dinner.

Sunday morning she selected her most becoming gown and hat. It was a perfect day, and her satisfaction was almost complete. She created the usual stir as she walked up the aisle of the village church and took her seat near the front.

Less than five minutes afterward the professor came in and sat down in the pew opposite. He had been waiting outside half the morning, unobserved, but alert. After service Belinda gave him a fleeting smile of recognition and for some reason that was new to her turned and hurried home as fast as her pretty patent leather covered feet could carry her.

When school opened the following day the first person she encountered on entering the faculty hall was the new professor. She blushed to her ears and tried valiantly to retain her scholarly demeanor, but the dogged crimson showed persistently through the tanned cheeks, and her eyes were puzzled.

Hardiman made no effort to conceal his gratification, or if he did he was not at all successful. The rest of the teachers looked on in very quiet and good-natured amusement.

In a month the acquaintance grew to intimacy. In two it became a serious proposition. After three the only things lacking were the words and the ring.

The professor had at last made up his mind to propose. He had meant to restrain his ardor till the close of the term, but when it became manifest that the adorable little instructor of grade No. 4 reciprocated his affection prudence was thrown to the winds. He sat in his study pondering. Suddenly he got to work disposing of his reports in short but thorough order. He made a point of never slighting his duties for anything. Then he drew forth a square envelope and sheet of white paper to match. This seemed to him the most direct and final way of settling matters between them. Belinda was a coquette—there was no getting around that fact, even in one's most generous moments—and Hardiman was determined to corner her completely. He composed his lines carefully. They were inspirational. And now that he had broken the ice at last he meant to carry things to a rapid finish. The professor was nothing if not businesslike. He fished in a drawer and pulled out a teacher's resignation blank. This he put in a separate envelope and directed both to the dearest girl in the world.

The following morning the postman's shrill whistle brought Belinda herself to the door. She took the mail and glanced through it hastily, rivers of scarlet flowing over her cheeks as she recognized Hardiman's familiar backhand. She tore open the envelope eagerly and scanned the contents with whitening face. The paper fell from her fingers, and she leaned limply against the banister rail. So she was asked, in the briefest possible way, to resign, and she had dared to dream—she had been so sure—she had been such a fool! She smothered the sob in her throat and in quick scorn of herself dashed the hot tears from her eyes. Then she pulled herself together sharply and went upstairs. With trembling fingers she filled out the blank and directed it to the board.

Drab weeks followed. Every effort the professor made to gain an audience with Belinda failed. He had mortified and insulted her flagrantly, and she would see that he got no more chances to repeat the indignity. As to Hardiman, he was on the rack. Fool-like, he reflected, he had rushed in and frightened her away with his maudlin, importunate lovemaking and thus lost her for good. But perhaps, after all, it was not for him that she cared. What a dolt he had been to presume upon the affection of a matchless creature like that! Life grew to be a bitter struggle to him, and he began all at once to look his thirty-five years.

It was in May, almost the close of school. The day was warm and oppressive, and a lazy breeze was blowing. The professor made his way in absent weariness toward the schoolhouse, stopping on the way to get his mail from the postoffice. There were several circulars in his box and—his breath stopped—a communication from the dead letter office. He broke the seal anxiously, an intuitive knowledge of what it contained making his heart thump thickly. Sure enough, "Miss Belinda Maxwell, Greenville, Colo."

And this was Alabama! Unadulterated stupidity! If living in a place five years could make one responsible for an idiotic blunder of this sort, what else had he not done? He walked out of the post-office in a daze. All was clear enough now. She had never received his letter at all, only that wretched, confounded blank! No wonder she had frozen the very air about him—no wonder! Out in the open air, he quickened his footsteps. It was already 8:30, only ten minutes before the opening of school, but he turned directly into Oak street and forgot that he had ever been such a thing as principal of the Greenville high school.

In the distance he caught sight of a familiar blue tailor made gown. He doubled his pace and was quite up with Belinda before she realized his nearness. To her haughty glance, her cool drawing away from him, Hardiman paid no attention whatever, but thrust the letter into her hands in a determined, masterful way which she could not resist. Hypnotized, she opened it and read the lines through, the crimson moving in her cheeks:

My Darling—I want you to give up teaching and let me do it for both. I am not mistaken in thinking that you will come to me? Just a line, giving me the right to speak, and I shall attempt to tell you in a different way, in a thousand different ways, how much I worship you. Most earnestly.
R. W. H.

Belinda caught her breath in something between a sob and a laugh as she lifted her eyes shyly to his keen, appealing, apologizing and at last commanding glance. The professor was tardy, very tardy, that morning, but he gave his excuse of a headache glibly and mendaciously and dismissed pupils and teachers for a holiday. This he spent with Belinda.

Spurred by Necessity.
"Why do so many young men leave the farm?"
"Well," replied Farmer Cornstossel, "in most of the cases I have observed it was because they couldn't earn their salt as farm hands an' wasn't fixed to pay board."—Washington Star.

The Yee Faithful Dog.
A party of young Australians wanting a fish dinner filled a bottle with dynamite, attached a waterproof fuse and flung it into a pool in a creek. One of them had a retriever who had been taught to retrieve anything flung into the water, and the bottle had hardly touched the surface before Watch was after it. They yelled at him to leave it alone, but he paid no attention and soon was swimming shoreward with the fizzing bomb in his mouth. The young men ran for their lives, and the poor beast, thinking it all a great joke, came galloping after. He was within twenty yards of the hindmost when there was a stunning crash. Two of the men were thrown down, though, fortunately, not badly hurt. But of the unfortunate dog hardly a trace was left.

DEATH VALLEY DELIRIUM.

Madness That Leads to the Circuitous Route to Death.

Death valley, that treacherous road to madness that ends the life of its victim, was denominated by the early tribal Indians in California as the "Valley of Fire."

The Putes, Washoes and other tribes in early days condemned their criminals to the country surrounding Death valley. When an outlaw Indian violated the most sacred laws of his tribe he was condemned to the "Valley of Fire," where he was expected soon to perish.

Of the hundreds of bodies found in Death valley, where men perished from heat and thirst, they are almost universally naked to the waist. The trail made by the men before death also shows a circuitous course.

At a certain date, after being attacked by the heat, the person begins to run and claw at his breast. First his hat is abandoned. Then he begins to claw at his shirt and finally tears it from him.

Then he turns in a circuitous route and narrows the circuit until finally he falls exhausted in a heap and never rises again. Delirium comes on instantly.

It is when the heat delirium sets in that the victim begins to tear at his upper garments and run. It is presumed that the terrible suffering from the heat and thirst feels like a load on his lungs and makes breathing difficult and that the victim imagines by running he is getting away from the thing and that in clawing off his garments he is releasing the weight.

Scientists who have visited Death valley in warm weather and had a touch of the heat state that the extraordinary effect of the heat there is caused by the peculiar situation of Death valley. It is from 100 to 400 feet below sea level and is shut in on all sides by high mountains.

The atmosphere of that region is the driest of all places on earth. It absorbs from every living thing, both human and vegetable, every particle of moisture.

When the system is drained of all moisture the brain yields, the victim's eyes stare like a madman's, and he runs his circuitous course to death.—Indianapolis News.

Cold and a Candle.

Dr. Moss of the English polar expedition of 1875 and 1876, among other odd things, tells of the effect of cold on a wax candle which he burned. The temperature was 35 degrees below zero, and the doctor must have been considerably discouraged when, upon looking at his candle, he discovered that the flame had all it could do to keep warm. It was so cold that the flame could not melt all the wax of the candle, but was forced to eat its way down the candle, leaving a sort of skeleton of the candle standing. There was heat enough, however, to melt oddly shaped holes in the thin walls of wax, and the result was a beautiful lacelike cylinder of white, with a tongue of yellow flame burning inside of it and sending out into the darkness many streaks of light.

Insomnia.

There are various simple cures for insomnia. The secret of the hot milk cure, often recommended for sufferers from insomnia, lies in sipping the beverage just before retiring. The act of slowly swallowing the liquid is soothing in its effect and generally produces the much desired drowsy feeling which leads to the coveted sleep. Bathing the feet in warm water just before going to bed is sometimes effective in inducing slumber. The use of drugs should be avoided, as once the habit is established it is not easy to secure sleep without them, and serious results are sure to ensue.

Shooting Stars.

When a shooting star breaks into flame in our atmosphere the residuum of the combustion remains in the air and can be found in what is known as atmospheric dust. The virgin snow of the polar regions is often seen to be spotted with traces of dust which contains particles of iron. Like particles are found on church towers and elsewhere. Among the minute bodies that dance in the sun's rays there are certainly particles of shooting stars.

It doesn't always pay to take the word for the deed. Many a fellow couldn't keep a promise in a safe deposit vault.—Goodwin's Weekly.

DON'T ABUSE YOUR EYES.

They Will Stand Only a Certain Measure of Bad Treatment.

The woman whose eyes suddenly commenced to hurt went to consult an oculist concerning them. She expected him to give them a perfunctory examination and then make some change in her glasses, but instead of that he put her carefully through a number of tests and then began to question her.

"What have you been doing to strain your eyes?" asked the oculist. "I?" replied the woman. "I? Why, nothing."

"No fancy work of any sort?"
"Oh, yes; I've crocheted forty table mats recently, but that wasn't a strain on my eyes."
"And you embroider, I suppose?"

"A little. I embroidered a blouse not long ago, but the work wasn't very fine and didn't hurt me a particle."

"I hate to have to put you in a dark room," said the oculist, "but I shall have to do so for at least a month. You will not be able to do any fine needlework for several years, if ever. You must not go to the theater nor to motion picture shows. You may not play cards. You must rest your eyes absolutely for months or I will not be responsible for the result."

"You have been straining your eyes pitifully for years. There are diseased spots on the back of them which will heal with care and time, and perfect rest, but sight will never be restored to them entirely."

"It is the most curious thing to me," said the oculist, "that people take care of every part of themselves except their eyes. Careful people go to a dentist at least twice a year. They pay the most rigid attention to their teeth, yet loss of teeth, however inconvenient, is not irreparable. Artificial teeth, pivoted teeth and bridges can, in large measure, replace natural ones."

"But there is no substitute for eyes. Once sight is gone it is only restored by a miracle of surgery or by the grace of God. Why, then, are eyes so much neglected? Why do people go to chiropodists and to all sorts of healer persons and never consult an oculist until fright drives them to him?"

"The eyes are abused more than any other organ. People read by half light and lying down, and with the light in front of them and in every other wrong way known and expect to retain their vision. They are mighty careful about their hair. They feel that their eyes are with them to stay and that nothing can rob them of these. You are one of those who is about to discover that eyes stand only a certain amount of bad treatment. You will probably consider this matter at length for the month that you are in that dark room."

The Queer Screw Plant.

There is nothing under the sun quite so quaint, so weird and witch-like as the pandanus prairies of Fiji. The pandanus, or screw plant as it is called, is a most grotesque specimen of the vegetable kingdom even at the best and in the early stages of its growth. In its very young days it is of an extraordinarily screwlike shape and looks as though some unkind hand had taken hold of its long, swordlike leaves and twisted them round and round. Later on it straightens out a bit, and from it grow a number of tall wooden stilts. Its foliage is simple, a number of drooping, ragged tufts, for all the world like mops and very mournful looking. Among these mops hangs the fruit, in shape like a pineapple, made up of hard red and yellow kernels, woody and fibrous and quite uneatable from a European's point of view.

Jessie.

It is related that when the young man who afterward became General Fremont ran away with and married Jessie Benton, her father, Tom Benton, the great senator, made terrible threats of what he would do to the young man. He would give him roasts and bullets, and so on. To all of which Mrs. Benton quietly remarked, "You had better give him Jessie, my dear."

Atlantis.

A. Henry Savage Landor discredits the existence of Atlantis, the island continent, which is supposed to have occupied much of the sea that now separates Europe from America and to have been submerged in a great earthquake. The first account of the existence of Atlantis comes from Plato, who gives the story as a tradition existing in his day, but there are still many persons who cherish the belief.

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