

An Anonymous Letter

But There Was a Clue
in It

By EVERETT P. CLARKE

Walter Borland at twenty-two was a very agreeable chap. He was not especially handsome, and since he paid very little attention to girls the girls paid very little attention to him. Such being the case, he had a very poor opinion of his powers of charming the fair sex. True, he thought little about the matter; he simply regarded himself as not a ladies' man.

One day the postman handed Walter a letter that brought the surprise of his life. It was postmarked and dated at the city of Cincinnati and signed by one of whom he had never heard, at least not by the name given. The writer said that she was a girl nineteen years old. She had met him and had fallen in love with him. She would not be so ungenerously as to reveal her identity, but she just couldn't help letting him know that there was a girl who loved him and would never love any one else.

There would be no chance of his discovering who she was because she had taken every pains to prevent his doing so. Without this she would be inexcusable in revealing her love for him. Possibly he might meet her again. If so he would be at liberty to woo her. If, indeed, he felt drawn to her, without knowing that he had already made a conquest.

Now, if Walter Borland were conscious of being a heart smasher, doubtless he would not have been seriously affected by this letter. As it was, he was very much moved by it. What any girl saw in him to cause her to give him her heart without even the slightest courtship—for he had never preferred any one girl to others—he couldn't imagine. His judgment told him that some one was putting up a job on him, but his amour propre said that it hoped the letter was genuine.

Then he fell to thinking out the problem as to who that lass might be. He had never lived in Cincinnati, and so far as he remembered, had never met a girl who was a resident of that city. Quite likely she had posted the letter while there temporarily or had sent it there to be posted. It seemed to him that she had been successful in her intention to conceal her identity, for he could see no possible clue. And yet it would be just like a girl to give a clue—that is, a clue that it would be next to impossible for him to hit upon.

He thought of all the girls he had ever known, trying to call up some mark of favor shown him by any one of the number. Not a girl of his acquaintance had ever indicated that she coveted his attentions.

All living beings are hunters, and man is the chief hunter of them all, though man's weapons are either intellectual or the result of intellectual action. Borland found himself facing a problem. A girl had confessed that she loved him, and he could never be satisfied until he had found her. His first move was to study the girls of his acquaintance. When he met one of them he would scrutinize her countenance with a view to seeing some telltale expression in it. If he failed to meet any one of them casually he called upon her. Not one received him with the slightest sign of embarrassment.

Being completely blocked in his efforts, he consulted his chum, Bob Carter, a young man who was supposed to understand women. Carter put him through an examination with a view to bringing out some indication that had been shown by one of his girl acquaintances. Borland mentioned a girl who had taken umbrage at some unintended slight he had given her. Carter pounced upon the lady as the writer of the letter. When a girl takes offense at a man's treatment of her it indicates that she is sensitive to his treatment. But unfortunately this young lady was not less than twenty years old, whereas the writer had described herself as nineteen. Nevertheless Borland applied certain tests, all of which failed to show any unusual interest in him.

Having failed to get any available counsel from a man, the young man or, rather, the young detective—for this is a detective story without the pale of criminality—concluded to try a woman. He consulted his friend Mrs. Cheltenham, a bride of three months.

"No girl," said the lady, "would write such a confession to a man without placing it within the bounds of possibility that he should discover her identity. She has given a clue, but if you discover it you will still be a long way from discovering the girl. I would advise you to examine her letter with a microscope. If that fails try chemicals. She may be a college girl up in chemistry."

It was evening when Borland received this advice, and, going to his house, he took out the letter, procured a hand glass of strong magnifying power and taking both to a gas jet, brought the glass to bear on the letter. In order to get the best light he held the paper within a few inches of the flame. Brownish letters came out across the face of the letter. "Dear

Borland would have been very glad had he not been able to interpret this

as June 12, 1912. Mrs. Cheltenham had hit the nail squarely on the head. "Get a woman to catch a woman," said Borland. "But she was also right in predicting that if I found a clue in the letter I would still be far from the girl. However, whoever she is, she is educated or she would not have known that citric acid becomes brown when heated. June 12, 1912—where was I on that day? It was nearly a year ago, and I doubt if I can determine just where I was."

But Borland sat himself down to think, and it was not long before he remembered that on June, 1912, he attended the graduating exercises of a women's college, where he had been introduced to more than a dozen young ladies and had seen and been seen by several hundred more. Surely his friend Mrs. Cheltenham must have the power of divining the human female mind, for he was not only far from discovering the writer of the letter, but among so many it would be impossible to pick out the culprit.

The graduating exercises of the women's college were approaching, and Borland considered the expediency of going there to look for a needle in a haystack. He called upon the lady who had put him on the track and told her that he now believed the letter to be a college prank and in that event he would take no further interest in it. His counselor replied that the age of the writer, if given correctly, rather indicated that she belonged to one of the lower classes or was not a college girl at all, since girls did not usually enter college before they were eighteen. Mrs. Cheltenham was rather inclined to believe that the writer of the letter was a visitor to the college, because she would not be likely to put him in possession of her location.

Borland attended the commencement exercises of the women's college, but he might as well have gone to Greenland for all the benefit his visit was to his search, and when he returned to his home he felt that if he ever found the letter writer it would be because she would give him an additional clue. His adviser told him that the girl had doubtless been at the college commencement and had seen him there. She therefore knew that he was hunting her. Better drop the matter. The girl doubtless was observing him, and if she saw that he had given up the chase she would very likely do something to urge him on.

Borland adopted the Fabian policy; but, as for not thinking about the matter, that was impossible. Toward the end of August he went into the country with his friend Carter to spend his vacation canoeing. One evening he went with Carter to a summer hotel for supper. While passing through the hall to the dining room they passed several young ladies. When they were seated at the table Carter said:

"Walter, I've found your girl!"

"Which? When? Where?" was the hurried response.

"Coming through the hall. One of the girls we met, the moment she saw you, started. Then the color all went out of her face and came back red as a jack rose."

"Pretty or homely?"

"A peach."

"Good! I must go and find her."

He was rising from his seat, but Carter held him down.

"Sit still. Do you want to spoil your romance? Eat your supper and keep cool. Your game is to pretend not to recognize the girl as the writer of the letter. Make her acquaintance, get spoons with her and at the proper time tell her you're going to turn turtle in your canoe because you're dying of love for her and have no hope of winning her."

"Is that the way it's done?"

"Of course it is. If you ever let her know that you are on to her secret she'll flee from you as from the wrath to come."

"By Joyce, Bob, where did you learn so much about women?"

"Any fool would know that."

"I've no doubt you're right. In due time get an introduction to her and introduce me."

"It won't do to hurry."

"But are you sure she's the girl?"

"She must be. No girl at meeting a man would start and go red and white by turns unless there was some important tie between her and him. But we must make her think right off that we're ignorant of her secret or she'll leave for parts unknown."

After the young men had finished their suppers they looked in the drawing room and on the piazza for the girl in question, but it was not till late in the evening that she showed herself. The men were on the piazza in the dark, while she was in a lighted room, so that Carter had no difficulty in pointing her out without her being aware that she was under observation.

The rest of the story is one of ordinary courtship, except that the suitor knew all the while that he had won. The young lady was not a student and had not played a college prank. She was an innocent girl who had relieved her mind by sending the man to whom she had given her heart on sight an anonymous letter, telling him of her love. After their engagement she sounded her betrothed as to the letter she had written him. He told her that he had received such a letter, but, thinking it to be a joke of some of his men friends, had torn it up. He dared not let her know even that he had considered it sincere. He expects some day to atone for the lie by telling her the truth, but thus far every time he has started to do so he has been frightened off. Possibly some day when they have been a long while married and the romance of love has given place to the reality of love he may venture to tell her that he knew from the time he met her that she loved him. Qu'en sabe?

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- 1 Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, block E.
- 2 Two fine building lots in block G, East View add.
- 3 For rent, house, barn, 3 lots; \$6; Ellis street. Property for sale.
- 4 For Sale, 2 good lots, on Pine street in block K, cultivated.
- 5 Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, block O, at a bargain; \$100 cash, bal. on terms at 8%.
- 6 Two lots, 6-r. house; fruit, berries, city water, electric light; close in, bargain.
- 7 For sale, One acre, adjoining city limits, with 5-room house. A bargain at \$425, terms. House to rent.
- 8 For sale — 9 acres, partially improved; house, timber; spring and living stream; near western city limits; price, \$1000, half cash.
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- 11 For sale, fine home in city, with 25 acres, 10 cultivated.
- 12 For sale, lots 7, 8, 14, 23 block K, and lots 11 and 12 block E. Will trade for Portland property.
- 13 For sale, lot 2 block M, M. ad.
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Manufacturers and Homeseekers who want to know the facts concerning Falls City and its possibilities for future development are requested to read the information given in these two columns. For further and more particular information, address The News.

The Name

The city derives its name from the falls of the Little Luckiamute River, which flows through the city from the West.

The first sale of town lots occurred in 1889, though donation land-claim settlers came here many years before that date. In 1900 the population was 269; in 1910, 969; 1914, about 1,260.

The Location

Falls City is situated in the south central part of Polk County Oregon, in section 21, township 8, S., range 6, W., Willamette meridian, 27 rail miles southwest of Salem, and 73 rail miles southwest of Portland, in the narrow western end of the Little Luckiamute River valley, surrounded on the north, south, and west by the foothills of the Coast Range mountains. Elevation, 886.38 ft above sea level. Transportation—Salem, Falls City & Western Railroad, which extends from Salem to Black Rock, a rail distance of 30 miles, with S. P. main line connections at Dallas, Gerlinger, and Salem, and with the Oregon Electric at Salem.

Falls City is incorporated as a city, and contains 758.33 acres, valuation for taxation \$268,837. The city administration is composed of mayor, seven councilmen, auditor and police judge, marshal, treasurer, engineer, health officer. Salaries: Marshal and water superintendent, \$60; auditor, \$25; attorney, \$25.

Water and Wood

The city of Falls City owns the gravity water system. Its first cost was \$30,000. Pure mountain water is piped from springs on Judge Teal's ranch, 3 miles away, at an elevation of about 300 feet above city level.

Oak and fir fire wood is plentiful and cheap.

Lumber, Fruit, Vegetables and Berries

Electric-power planing and saw mill, log pond, dry kiln and lumber yard in the city, lumber flume, logging roads and logging outfits, all owned and operated by the Falls City Lumber Co.

The surrounding bench and hill lands are as well adapted to the production of fruits and berries as any other section of the Pacific Northwest, and development on these lines is going on.

Vegetables and berries of many kinds grow to perfection in and adjoining Falls City, and many acres are planted to strawberries and loganberries. Market conditions are improving steadily, as production is increased.

Schools, Churches, Societies, Clubs

Falls City has a 12-grade school with a four-year high school course, with principal, assistant, and eight grade teachers. Its diplomas are accepted by the higher schools in lieu of examinations. The entire community is justly proud of the school.

The Religious organizations are: Adventist, Catholic, Christian, Free Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, German Lutheran.

The Fraternal societies: Ind. Order of Oddfellows, Rebekahs, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Pythian Sisters, Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Neighbors of America, Woodmen of the World, Women of Woodcraft.

Free reading room. Gem theatre, photoplay.

Hydro-electric light generated by the power of the falls; owned by the Falls City Electric Co., W. B. Stevens president, H. C. Brown vice-president and manager, A. W. Stevens secretary and treasurer.

Telephone system, with long-distance connections. C. J. Pugh local manager.

Business Enterprises

Falls City is well provided with the usual business enterprises. The News contains the announcements of the following business and professional men of the city:

- Bakery, D. Toller,
- Bank of Falls City, W. F. Nichols cashier.
- Barber shops, Wm. Bohle.
- Carpenters and Builders, Elle & Elle, S. Ouderkirk.
- Clothier, Tailor and gents' furnisher, Chas. Hartung.
- Confectionery stores: B. L. Ellis, R. B. Harrington.
- Drug store, M. L. Thompson.
- Dentist, Dr. A. G. Atwood.
- Department store, N. Selig.
- Funeral director, R. L. Chapman.
- Furniture, J. C. Talbott & Co.
- General stores, N. Selig, F. C. Lumber Co., F. C. Merc. Co.
- Hardware store, J. C. Talbott & Co.
- Hotels: Falls City Hotel, Fritz Droege, owner and manager; The Madena, Mrs. Mae Nichols, Mrs. Dannis, managers
- Jewelry store, W. A. Persey.
- Newspaper, the Falls City News, C. W. Lee.
- Photoplay theatre, the Gem, C. J. Pugh.
- Physicians, Dr. W. B. Officer; Dr. F. M. Hellwarth.
- Pressing and cleaning parlor, I. A. Johnston.
- Railroads, Salem, Falls City & Western, Southern Pacific.
- Real estate agent, F. K. Hubbard Realty Co.
- Restaurant, The Madena; Wm. Finley, owner.
- Saloons: The Oregon, C. W. Matthews; The Idaho, Chas. Mix.

Boost for a Gymnasium for the School