

**THE TYPE WRITTEN LETTER—
ROMANCE BY ROBERT BARR**

When a man has battled with poverty all his life, fearing it as he fought it, feeling for its skinny throat to throttle it, and yet dreading all the while the coming of the time when it would gain the mastery and throttle him—when such a man is told that he is rich, it might be imagined he would receive the announcement with hilarity. When Richard Denham realized that he was wealthy he became even more sober than usual and drew a long breath as if he had been running a race and had won it. The man who brought the news had no idea he had told Denham anything. He merely happened to say, "You are a rich man, Mr. Denham, and will never miss it."

Denham had never before been called a rich man, and up to that moment he had not thought of himself as wealthy. He wrote out the check asked of him, and his visitor departed gratefully, leaving the merchant with something to ponder over. He was as surprised with the suddenness of the thing as if some one had left him a legacy. Yet the money was all his own accumulating; but his struggle had been so long, and he had been so hopeless about it, that from mere habit he exerted all his energies long after the enemy was overcome—just as the troops at New Orleans fought a fierce battle, not knowing the war was over. He had sprung from such a hopelessly poor family. Poverty had been their inheritance from generation to generation. It was the invariable legacy that father had left to son in the Denham family. All had accepted their lot with resignation, until Richard resolved he would at least have a fight for it. And now the fight had been won. Denham sat in his office staring at the dingy wall paper so long that Rogers, the chief clerk, put his head in and said, in a deferential voice:

"Anything more tonight, Mr. Denham?"

Denham started as if that question, in that tone, had not been asked him every night for years.

"What's that? what's that?" he cried.

Rogers was astonished, but too well trained to show it.

"Anything more tonight, Mr. Denham?"

"Ah, quite so. No, thank you; nothing more."

"Good night, Mr. Denham."

"Eh? Oh, yes; good night, Rogers, good night."

When Mr. Denham left his office and went out into the street, everything had an unusual appearance to him. He walked long, unheeding the direction. He looked at the fine residences, and realized that he might have a fine residence if he wanted it. He saw handsome carriages; he, too, might set up an equipage. The satisfaction these thoughts produced was brief. Of what use would a fine house or an elegant carriage be to him? He knew no one to invite to the house or to ride with him in the carriage. He began to realize how utterly alone in the world he was. He had no friends—no acquaintances, even. The running dog with its nose to the ground sees nothing of the surrounding scenery. He knew men in a business way, of course, and doubtless each of them had a home in the suburbs somewhere; but he could not take a business man by the shoulders and say to him, "Invite me to your house. I am lonely; I want to know people."

If he got such an invitation he would not know what to do with himself. He was familiar with the counting room and its language, but the drawing room was an unexplored country to him, where an unknown tongue was spoken. On the road to wealth he had missed something, and it was now too late to go back for it. Only the day before he had heard one of the clerks, who did not know he was within ear-shot, allude to him as "the old man." He felt as young as ever he did, but the phrase, so lightly spoken, made him catch his breath.

As he was now walking through the park and away from the busy street, he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his grizzled hair, looking at his hand when he had done so as if the gray, like wet paint, had come off. He thought of the girl he knew once, who perhaps would have married him if he had asked her, as he was tempted to do. But that had always been the mistake of the Denhams. They

had all married young, except himself, and so sunk deeper into the mire of poverty, pressed down by a rapidly increasing progeny. The girl had married a baker, she remembered. Yes, that was a long time ago. The clerk was not far wrong when he called him an old man. Suddenly another girl arose before he mental vision—a modern girl, very different indeed to the one who had married the baker. She was the only woman in the world with whom he was on speaking terms, and he knew her merely because her light and nimble fingers played the business sonata of one note on his office type writer. Miss Gale was pretty, of course—all type writer girls are—and it was generally understood in the office that she belonged to a good family who had come down in the world. Her somewhat independent air deepened this conviction and kept the clerks at a distance. She was a sensible girl who realized that the type writer paid better than the piano, and accordingly turned the expertness of her white fingers to the former instrument. Richard Denham sat down upon a park bench. "Why not?" he asked himself. There was no reason against it, except that he felt he had not the courage. Nevertheless he formed a desperate resolution.

Next day business went on as usual. Letters were answered, and the time arrived when Miss Gale came in to see if he had any further commands that day. Denham hesitated. He felt vaguely that a business office was not the proper place for a proposal, yet he knew he would be at a disadvantage anywhere else. In the first place, he had no plausible excuse for calling upon the young woman at home; and in the second place, he knew, if he once got there he would be stricken dumb. It must either be at his office or nowhere.

"Sit down a moment, Miss Gale," he said at last. "I want to consult you about a matter—a business matter."

Miss Gale seated herself, and automatically placed on her knees the shorthand writing pad, ready to take down his instructions. She looked at him expectantly. Denham in an embarrassed manner, ran his fingers through his hair.

"I am thinking," he began, "of taking a partner. The business is very prosperous now; in fact, it has been for some time."

"Yes!" said Miss Gale, interrogatively.

"Yes. I think I should have a partner. It is about that I wanted to speak to you."

"Don't you think it would be better to consult with Mr. Rogers? He knows more about business than I. But perhaps it is Mr. Rogers who is to be the partner?"

"No, it is not Rogers. Rogers is a good man. But—it is not Rogers."

"Then I think in an important matter like this Mr. Rogers, or some one who knows business as thoroughly as he does, would be able to give you advice that would be of some value."

"I don't want advice exactly. I have made up my mind to have a partner, if the partner is willing."

Denham mopped his brow. It was going to be even more difficult than he had anticipated.

"Is it, then, a question of the capital the partner is to bring in?" asked Miss Gale, anxious to help him.

"No, no. I don't wish for any capital. I have enough for both. And the business is very prosperous, Miss Gale—and has been."

The young woman raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"You surely don't intend to share the profits with a partner who brings no capital into the business?"

"Yes—yes, I do. You see, as I said, I have no need for more capital."

"Oh, if that is the case, I think you should consult Mr. Rogers before you commit yourself."

"But Rogers wouldn't understand."

"I'm afraid I don't understand either. It seems to me a foolish thing to do—that is, if you want my advice."

"Oh, yes, I want it. But it isn't as foolish as you think. I should have had a partner long ago. That is where I made the mistake. I've made up my mind on that."

"Then I don't see that I can be of

Continued on Page 6

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