

# DAILY REPORTER.

VOL. II. NO. 9

McMINNVILLE, OREGON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1887.

PRICE TWO CENTS.

## The Daily Reporter.

Entered in the Postoffice at McMinnville for Transmission Through the Mails as Second Class Matter.

D. C. IRELAND. E. L. E. WHITE.

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## A LOVE TIFF.

They had a love-quarrel. Ethan Nash and Tilly Fogg had been the most earnest of lovers, especially Tilly. Ethan did not betray half the warmth about it that she did, because it never was in him; but if ever man wanted more devotion, and affection, and all that sort of thing than Tilly Fogg generously lavished on Ethan Nash, he must have been an unnatural and exacting fellow.

For some days they had been very careful not to speak to one another. No two people ever tried so hard to be entirely indifferent each to the other.

At last it got to be so bad that Ethan had stayed away from Tilly for two or three weeks. How he managed to do it was a mystery, and always will be; it can be explained only on principles of contraries, and sulks, and oddities.

It was getting to be rather unpleasant, considered in all points of view. There was poor Tilly almost dying from the treatment, though she never would have entered a complaint of any sort in the ear of any living soul; her eye was beginning to lose a little of its usual brightness—I could see it plainly enough—and the red roses on her cheeks were fading rather fast.

There happened to be another young miss in the village, who had been teaching the district school during the summer, and had finally concluded that it would be the pleasantest thing she could do to stay through the winter, too, and visit around. Just at this particular time she was staying at Squire Judkin's house. Her name was Lucy Doane.

Lucy Doane was just the smartest girl, in her own estimation, I think I ever knew. Having been selected to instruct the younger portion of the children the past summer in needlework and a-b, ab, and being considered competent to keep the smallest ones from rolling off the benches, while asleep, upon the floor, she somehow reasoned herself into the complacent idea that there was no lady in the place who could beat her in conversation, correct grammar, or, indeed, any of the accomplishments that were going.

She wore glasses with silver bows, mitts on her hands, and always kept her work-bag on her left arm. A perfect picture of a "school-marm" in all the person's parts and qualities.

At this particular time there was a deep fall of snow on the ground, and the sleighing was glorious. Bells and belles made the old country roads merry, far and near. There were parties without number to the neighboring towns, making up merry dances in every old tavern-hall, where the screech of the fiddle had ever resounded.

Well, to make the story as short as possible, Ethan received a very neatly written note one afternoon from Lucy Doane, written in her characteristic style of precision and firmness, all correctly phrased and spelled, saying that she would be very happy to accept his polite invitation to go to the next ball over at Uptfield, and would hold herself in readiness accordingly.

"What's all this!" exclaimed Ethan when he had fairly read the note through.

He was puzzled and confounded. "I never invited Lucy Doane to go to the Uptfield ball in my life! Why, what does she mean? I'm sure I don't know how to proceed in such a case!"

Which was all perfectly true. Ethan Nash was in a regular quandary.

So he came right over to consult with me about it. Why he selected me out of all the rest of his numerous acquaintances in the village, I never knew, and probably never shall, but he came and laid the matter plainly before me, and says he:

"Now, John, I want your advice."

"You shall have it, with all my heart," says I.

"I'm in a regular fix," said he. "You see, the way of it is this: Here I've got a letter from Lucy Doane," producing it from his pocket, and holding it out at arm's-length, "and she says in that letter that she is very happy to accept my kind invitation to go to the sleighing party up to Uptfield, when the fact is I never asked her to go with me in my life."

I could not help smiling. "Rather awkward," I suggested.

"Isn't it? Now I wish you would tell me what I'd better do about it."

"Do?"

"Yes, what would you do? You see, I must do something."

"Oh, certainly; that letter must be answered somehow."

"Then what would you say to it. How would you try to get out of it, John?"

"I'd up and thank her for accepting," said I, "and then I'd secure a nice sleigh against the time came around and carry her."

"You would! The Old Harry must be in you!"

"On the contrary, I assure you it's just the best thing you can possibly do. Just take my advice for once and see what will come of it."

He hung down his head, put the note in his pocket, and suffered himself to think of it.

There was no chance of escape. He saw for himself, thanks to his native common-sense, that the best way to silence that battery was to walk straight up to it.

Which he did, and sent back his message of thanks to Lucy for deigning to comply with his request.

The afternoon of the sleigh-ride was cold and biting as you would care to read about. Even at noon the sun had not set a single icicle to running at the eaves, and the snow in the road-track was as smooth and polished as marble.

"I've got my sleigh," said Ethan to me, in a rather confidential manner. "It's Ben Ball's cutter. He didn't want to use it himself. Jake's going with a two-horse establishment. But mind you—I had to pay for it."

When the twilight advanced—what little there was of it at that time of the year—I saw Ethan Nash driving up pell-mell with Tom Nickinson's fiery little mare, the cutter digging her heels like a sledge after a reindeer. Ethan had as much as he could do to manage her.

Subsequent to that slight glimpse of Ethan, buzzing by my window as he did, I caught no other until I stood in the little ball-room, having ushered in (as I thought) a very handsome young lady in a fancy dress with "fixings" to correspond, and taken a modest, if not decidedly timid survey of the floor.

There was Ethan in full feather. He was dressed "with all his might," and couldn't have spared a single item of his inventory without damaging his effectiveness decidedly. In fact, he meant to be killing.

Near where he stood sat Lucy Doane, simpering and whimpering behind her half-spread fan, her round face as red as a wasting winter-apple, her eyes upturned to him in an exceedingly languishing style, and lots of young girls surveying them with feelings so mixed that I shall be excused from describing them.

By the bye in came Tilly Fogg with Edward Marks.

How Ethan did stare straight at her, and how she did stare straight back at him; I sat where I could see it all; and there were others that saw it as well. For a few minutes the friends and acquaintances of each party were instantly engaged in regarding their conduct.

Ethan instantly threw his eyes up at the opposite wall, just as if there were no such person as Tilly Fogg in the room. On her part, to exhibit a proper

degree of resentment, she pursed her pretty mouth, gave her head a contemptuous toss, and acted as independently as if she was to lead off in the dance herself that night, and knew it.

Well, and what was a little strange, too, she did lead off, standing with her partner, who was a young student of law in the office of Squire Docket, at the head of the figure.

How elegant she looked in her tasteful dress and with her beautiful color!

What an air of queenly pride she portrayed as she smoothed down the glossy hair on her temples and looked over the rustic crowd as if she knew well enough that she was the belle of the evening.

Ethan stood a good way down the floor, and it was noticeable what an everlasting chat his fair partner—Lucy Doane—kept up for him behind her well-spread fan. Only once or twice Ethan's eyes wandered up to where the little figure of Tilly Fogg was standing, but Lucy Doane watched every movement and brought him back to his senses again.

As for Tilly, she was perfectly wretched, though she did laugh and chatter so much with her partner, the young law student. There was excess in her actions, and that was enough to betray her.

Anyone with even half an eye could see that at once. But no doubt it assisted to heighten her beauty; for but for this unhappy pressure on her pride and her self-will, there would have been no such suffusion about her cheeks, nor no such imperious expression about her beautiful eyes.

"I don't see but what we are really making out a nice time of it," said Ethan to Lucy.

"This is fine—very fine!" said Edward Marks to Tilly at about the same moment.

It was something of a coincidence, and deserving of a chronicler, as here it finds one.

When we went down to supper the confusion was excessive.

They all rushed into the supper-room in a state bordering on despair, acting as if there was but one chance in a thousand of their ever getting another mouthful to eat in the world.

The tables groaned, and so did those who sat down to them before they got up. There was a smart business done for some time in the way of eating, and hungry folks might have looked with a hearty relish and envied them.

The party broke up toward early morning, dancers, fiddlers, and all. By the dull light of the stars that winked and twinkled so steadily far off in the sky, they sallied forth from before the door in their sleighs for home again.

Ethan and Lucy Doane felt considerably sleepy on their way back, and, as a consequence, very little was said by either during their brisk ride. As for Tilly and the young student, she was entirely unhappy, and he was—shall I confess it?—a very little "mashed!"

It was easy enough for everybody to see now that Ethan Nash and Tilly loved one another, and this show of indifference on their part was the greatest piece of mere acting—heartless and hollow—imaginable.

The rest of us who knew all this and more, too, from the beginning, determined to put an end to it. They had been living on "stuff" a great while longer than they ought to have done.

So the next day there was a concerted arrangement made among ourselves to bring them all together.

It was over at Susan Wilde's house, and the hour was just before tea.

First came in Ethan. He was going round to dissipate the day through, and we knew at about what time he would be there. Then followed Lucy Doane. She was all smiles and syllables, for she felt confident as she ever wanted to be that she had at last won the heart of Ethan Nash.