

GEO. W. WAGENSELLER, Editor and Proprietor.

MIDDLEBURGH, PA., MAY 13, 1897.

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That Tantalizing Letter.



WELL, I'm bothered if I can tell who it's from! "It" was a letter; and, surely, the easiest way for Mr. Sprunt to arrive at the desired information was simply to open it. No doubt; but here arose a slight difficulty: it wasn't his. The postman had delivered it at the shop by mistake. It was addressed to Miss Nancy Vale.

All day the sight of it lying on the top of a ham on the counter had literally tantalized him. When the shutters were going to be put on for the night, he took it up for a final scrutiny. "The postmark's London," he ruminated. "I never heard tell of any—my goodness! I've done it now!" And so he had. The imperfect adhesion of the envelope had yielded altogether to his too insinuating finger.

Of course, now that it was open, it would have been a depth of folly passing Mr. Sprunt's comprehension not to master the contents, and his face actually quivered with suppressed excitement during the perusal. "If that doesn't beat the Dutch!" he ejaculated on reaching the end. "A legacy of five hundred pounds from her grand aunt. If I had known this was going to happen, I would have made her Mrs. Sprunt long ago. I've always been fond of Nancy, and I'm fonder now than ever. What a mercy this letter came my way!"

This was no time, however, for moral reflections. The situation called for immediate action. In order to secure this golden windfall for his own coffers, he must not let the grass grow under his feet.

A moment's cogitation showed that the first thing to be done was to get the fair legatee, by hook or by crook, to promise to marry him before she knew of her good luck.

Suppose he proposed that night, and was accepted? In the course of a day or two he could produce the letter, all sealed up again, as if it had newly arrived. Once Nancy had pledged her word, he could depend on her not throwing him over.

With Mr. Sprunt to think was to act, especially when five hundred pounds were at stake. It was a blustering March evening, both raining and blowing at a rate enough to quell the ardor of any ordinary suitor. But a deluge of old wives and pike-staves wouldn't have deterred the redoubtable Sprunt from setting out for Cherry-tree Cottage to put his fortune (or rather Nancy's) to the test.

A few minutes' battling with the elements brought him to his destination. In answer to his rousing rat-tat-tat on the knocker, Nancy appeared at the door, accompanied by Spook, a handsome black cat.

"Ah!" says the clever reader; "an old maid!" Well, she was single, undoubtedly, but it wasn't from want of—"An offer," interposes the readers, with a cynical smile. "It never is."

To tell the little dressmaker's story to one capable of making so vile an insinuation would be casting pearls before swine. Enough to say that ten years before, Nancy, then a winsome dark-eyed maiden of eighteen, had played out her own romance.

To bring about a reconciliation between her lover and his tyrannical father who had threatened to disinherit him if he persisted in his attentions to her, she had given poor Tom his conge, coldly, firmly, finally.

Instead of this having the effect anticipated, it made life at home seem so intolerable to young Ford that he ran away. From that ill-fated day Nancy had never seen her lover again, though his haggard face and that last look in his eyes as of some dumb animal in pain had haunted her ever since.

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GEO. W. WAGENSELLER, Editor and Proprietor.

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Germany is doing her best to divert the emigration of her subjects from this country.