

The Mystery of a Proposal.

BY J. NOEL JOHNSON.
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"Of all strange featers about human nater to me," said Aunt Jemima Meaders, "the quarest one is that them folks who have come off first best from the hand o' nater, is the kind that sets the least value on the work, while what nater has been stingy, hard, an' ugly, in turnin' out a job, thar you'll find most rediculous self-apreshun. The sweetest flowers hide in ugly nooks, while dog-fennel, jimson-weed, and burdock crowd along the highway."

"I've allers noticed that ar," returned old Nance Latimer, giving her clay pipe fresh feed. "I've allers noticed that hang-back dispersion on the part of the feater-favored people. Everybody wants ter chase arter 'em, an' thar keeps 'em, like a dogged cat, in er chronic state o' skeer. I'm most 'shamed ter let it git out, Mis' Meaders, but, when I was a gal, I wuz more retrin' nor a crawfish. When young fellers wud come swarmin' ter our house, I'd go up the ladder to the left like a squirrel up er tree, leavin' my plain but brave sisters to bear the brunt. As er consequence, they was carried off years afore me, an' I'd er still bin single ef it hadn't er bin for Mom's trick. One day, when she seed Joe Latimer comin', she took down the ladder as he was comin' in at the door. He caught me an' wouldn't let me go till I blessed him with a promise."

Aunt Jemima lifted her bandana, dropped a smile among its folds, and proceeded:

"I hear'n o' thar—yas, take that Edgar Taggart for a sample. He's tall, broad, fine shap'd, an' is graceful as a pine when bowin' an' scrapin' to a soft wind; still, look how he tries to sneak away his beauty! He enters the church house like a timid child pullin' back from a stranger. Gals all focus on him as he enters, an' jest set drinkin' his beauty while he snooks off in er dark corner an' sets blushin' like a smoky sunset. On the other hand, here comes Tim Bradford, who is ugly enough to make an ole family nag run away. His white hair sticks out in wisps, like paint breshes. His lips look like the edges of wet sole leather forced together. His ears stick out like fans. His eyes run out and his forehead runs back. His nose, long, thin, high an' crooked, looks like it had been whittled from a clapboard with a dull knife, and stuck on his dough-colored face by a drunkein' hand. Still he enters a church, an', in ever look an' motion, seems ter announce: 'Here I come, the king of grace an' booty!' An' his ugly impudence carries him to the sides of the pirtiest gals when church is over. While others sigh an' wish they could, he goes right in an' dares an' does."

"It ain't no surprise to me that he's engaged to Dolly Madden, one of the pirtiest gals on the cricks. While poor Edgar Taggart who loves Emma Salyers, the sweetest gal in the county, an' is worshipped by her, stands around, like a sick rooster in a cold rain, an' never offers to go with her. 'Hit makes me sorry for both of 'em. She does all a modest gal can do to toll him up, but he never gets in grabbin' distance of her. She's tried goin' with others to spur up his jealousy, but it only skeers him fudder off. Hits a plum pity. His bashfulness promises to leave him in miserable ole bachelorhood, an' will force poor Ella, at some hopeless hour, into a marriage with some cheeky thing she don't want. But my son Fred, the lawer out to Vanceburg, tole me when he was home last Sunday that he was goin' to fix on a plan to git 'em together, an' ef he sots in on it, he'll work it. Him an' Edgar allers wuz the greatest cronies in the world, an' its through love for Ed an' friendship for Emma that will cause him to fix up some rascally trick to get 'em yoked. Can't fool them sharp lawyers, I tell ye!"

About a week after the above chat between Aunt Jemima Meaders and old Mis' Latimer, an elegant looking "town gent" called at the home of Edgar Taggart.

"Why, hello, Fred! Come in, sir," effusively greeted Edgar Taggart when he appeared at the door in response to the former's knock.

"Of course I'll go in, and have a chair and 'make my self to hum,'" laughingly spoke the young lawyer.

"What's the news, Fred?" inquired Edgar, as a conversation started.

"I hear you are to get married right away."

"W-h-a-t!" exclaimed Edgar, spreading his blue eyes.

"That's all I hear, and it's news enough for one time. I knew for years you were crazy about one another, and I'd feared you would never muster up the spunk to propose, but I congratulate you on a species of courage I thought entirely lacking in you. A finer match was never made in the mountains. You are as good as you look, and she looks as good as she is, and that's a great deal to say indeed—but not a bit too much. Oh, don't sit there with your eyes popping, and your jaw on your collar bone! You don't know how I know but here's her answer. I was at her house not over an hour ago—in fact I carried your letter of proposal to her, and as I wanted this long-standing case closed

up—fled away, as it were—I insisted on her answer instantan'."

"You took my letter of proposal! What do you mean, man? Are you crazy?"

"I may be in some respects. It's a theory of some high grade philosophers that on some point or another, we're all crazy. I'm crazy, I think, after a little beauty out to town, whose father has a fortune, and you're doubtless crazy about Emma. You've let your mind run on her long enough, the Lord knows! But drop that crazy stare and stare at this:"

Edward took an unsealed envelope thrown in his lap by the lawyer and read:

My Dearest Edgar:
As you doubtless surmise, I accept your proposal to marry, although to wed this evening, I had thought a little sudden. Mr. Meaders, who brought me your letter, insists that it is not too sudden, however. He says you have your reasons for desiring a hasty marriage. I shall not insist on knowing them. I'll be ready at 8:30 this evening.

Forever yours,
EMMA SALYERS.
Well, that beats me!" exclaimed the young man, astonishment, incredulity and delight all jumbled together in his expression.

"I see nothing mysterious about it. A young man writes a letter to a girl proposing marriage. A friend takes it where it belongs, and returns with the girl's letter accepting with pleasure—simplest thing in the world."

"I never wrote her any letter. I'll swear it!"

"Don't try to throw the girl now, young man, because you feel too cowardly to do what your heart and honor commands—no; nor you shouldn't swear either, for I'm county examiner, and authorized to administer oaths, and I have your own letter here that would convict you of false swearing. Here, isn't this your handwriting?"

Edgar took the proffered slip of paper and read as follows:
My Dearest Emma:
As you know, for years I have loved you—secretly, madly loved you! I have tried to muster up the courage to tell you so in words, but always failed. Now, I've finally decided to write you. Will you be my wife? And if so, would you object to the ceremony to-morrow evening?"

Yours ever,
EDGAR TAGGART.
The man put his hand to his forehead, as if he felt his reason going. Finally, he said:

"Fred, I'd be the most delighted man in the world did I not fear I was either in a dream or going daff. This is my handwriting, still, Fred, I tell you I never wrote it."

"Then I fear for your reason myself. I stopped here yesterday and found all of you away."

"Yes; some one was here. Mother said she missed all her custard pies from the safe."

"Just so; well, after eating all I wanted, I happened to look on your writing desk, and saw this letter addressed and unsealed. I opened it, and read it. I feared you'd never have courage to mail it, and so I took the liberty of a life-long chum to benefit you everlastingly by carrying it to her myself. So here we are, ready for a wedding."

Edgar's great joy was dampened by the mystery of his letter. He knew he had never written it, still any one who knew his chirography would have sworn it was his handwriting.

While he still sat, helpless and stunned before the mystery, the young lawyer's puzzled look vanished and his face blazed with the light of discovery.

"Edgar," he shouted, gleefully rubbing his hands together, "I'll bet I have a solution to the mystery that will relieve you from the menace of insanity. You wrote the letter while in a somnambulistic state. You know you used to get up at midnight, when we camped out that season, cutting cordwood; and would sometimes get a fire started, preparatory to breakfast-getting when I would awaken you."

"That's so!" cried Edgar, brightening, "and I was up and all over the place night before last."

"During which time you wrote this proposal?"

"Undoubtedly."

After the ceremony, the lawyer took Edgar to one side and admitted he had forged the letter, being so familiar with the groom's handwriting. "Just name your first boy for me is all I ask as a return favor."

The Lady Lieutenant Quits.

The only woman with the rank of lieutenant in the army has resigned. Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, daughter of Simon Newcomb McGee, the astronomer, was appointed acting assistant surgeon in the United army in August, 1898, to aid in the selection and equipment of a corps of army nurses for field and hospital work. The appointment carried with it the rank of first lieutenant and the right to wear the shoulder straps and uniform of an officer of that grade, a right for which she did not avail herself. The work for which she was appointed having now been fairly organized, Dr. McGee has resigned, and no successor will be named.

Carrying Away the Monument.

The Washington monument is said to be slowly but surely disappearing. Vandals are carrying it away in their pockets. The interior is constantly being defaced. In many places the inscriptions on stones contributed by the various states of the union, as well as those sent by organizations, have been greatly injured. From the appearance of some of the marble it has been attacked with iron instruments. Letters have been broken off the tablets. While the great bulk of the damage is doubtless done by relic hunters, some of the highly polished stones have been injured simply for the sake of defacing them.

A VETERAN SPEAKS.

The Honorable Moses B. Crane of Tacoma, Wash., Tells How Old Soldiers May Help Themselves.

Tacoma, Wash., Jan. 5, 1901.—(Special.)—"I used to have Heart Disease, but thanks to Dodd's Kidney Pills I now have Heart's Ease."

"Five years ago I was a continual sufferer of Heart Disease. Exposure during the war, and a tendency to grow over fleshy, had greatly aggravated this dread disease. I often had to sit up half the night. I had it so bad when I would lie down, life looked pretty blue to me, as I thought there was no relief, until one day I read an advertisement of Dodd's Kidney Pills. I bought a box that same day, and it was the best day's work I ever did. Before I had used all the first box I could eat and sleep better than I had done for many years, and after three months' faithful treatment, my health was completely restored. I am an old man now, but my step is as elastic and my brain as clear as when I was thirty years of age."

These are the words of the Hon. Moses B. Crane, secretary of Odlin Lodge, No. 123, I. O. O. F. of this city. The Hon. Mr. Crane is also Senior Vice-Commander of G. A. R. Post No. 5, Tacoma.

Those who know Mr. Crane have the fullest confidence in his honesty and truthfulness, and know that he would not give this unsolicited testimonial unless he had actually experienced the relief which he indicates in his letter. Dodd's Kidney Pills are having a wonderful sale among Mr. Crane's friends—and their name is legion—in this part of the country. There does not seem to be a single case of Heart Disease, Kidney or Bladder Weakness, or Rheumatism, that Dodd's Kidney Pills do not permanently cure.

The candidate who expresses himself is often beaten by another who pays the freight.

For starching fine linen use Magnetic Starch.

Many a man starts out to gather wool and gets fleeced himself.

PUTNAM FADELESS DYES do not spot, streak or give your goods an unevenly dyed appearance.

An old toper says he envies acorns because they always remain in their cups until they drop.

Iowa's Oldest Voter.

In a newspaper hunt for the oldest voter in Iowa, William Zimmer, of Clinton, has been found, who says his first vote was cast for James Monroe in 1820. He was then living in New York state, and had just passed his 21st year, which would make him now above 100 years of age. The rest of the country is challenged to produce a voter who can beat this record.

Prickly Pear a Nuisance.

One of the most serious difficulties in the way of land settlement in some parts of Australia is said to be an obnoxious plant called the prickly pear. As a pest to farmers it may be fairly classed with the rabbits. It has taken possession of whole tracts of country and the settler has to fight a pitched battle for every acre he calls his own. A single fruit brings forth thirty—sixty and even a hundred fold of good productive seed. All herbage may droop, die and disappear in the oven of an Australian drouth, but the pear survives, flourishes and carries on its processes of expansion and reproduction with unconcern. In the fierce "struggle for life" when a drouth is devastating the land this pest is a living example of the survival of the "fittest." It was brought to Australia, like the rabbit, either for use or ornament, and it has become a plague and a pestilence. Its extermination in the colony of Queensland, at least, is a question of national importance.

Our Consul at Harpoot.

Dr. Thomas H. Norton, United States consul at Harpoot, is forty-nine years old and a graduate of Hamilton college. He was for seventeen years professor of chemistry in Cincinnati university.

The average man thinks other people need church more than he does.

We pay \$18 a Week and expenses. Send for FREE \$2.00 trial bottle and treatise. Dr. R. H. Kane, Ltd., 931 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa.

A set of false teeth is an emblem of time.

The beneficial results of Garfield Tea upon the system are apparent after a few days' use. THE COMPLEXION IS CLEARED FOR THE BLOOD HAS BEEN PURIFIED.

The man who possesses a million is a capital fellow.

Every little vice is the subject of a lot of advice.

The favorite for restoring life and color to the hair is PARKER'S HAIR BALM. HINDSBORO, the best cure for corns. 15c.

The oftener a man is in the wrong the louder he crows when he happens to be right.

TO CURE A COLD IN ONE DAY. Take LAXATIVE BROM. QUINISE TABLETS. All druggists refund the money if it fails to cure. E. W. Grove's signature is on the box. 25c.

No matter how changeable a man may be he always wants a little more change.

\$148 will buy new Upright piano on easy payments. Write for catalogue. Schmoller & Mueller, 1313 Farnam street, Omaha.

Love doesn't laugh at the minister, and he is love's locksmith.

Throw physic to the dogs—if you don't want the dogs—but if you want good digestion chew Heenan's Pepsin Gum.

A schoolboy says there are too many switches on the road to knowledge.

Deafness Cannot Be Cured by local applications, as they cannot reach the diseased portion of the ear. There is only one way to cure deafness, and that is by constitutional remedies. Deafness is caused by an inflamed condition of the mucous lining of the Eustachian Tube. When this tube is inflamed you have a rumbling sound or imperfect hearing, and when it is entirely closed deafness is the result, and unless the inflammation can be taken out and this tube restored to its normal condition, hearing will be destroyed forever. Nine cases out of ten are caused by catarrh, which is nothing but an inflamed condition of the mucous surfaces.

We will give One Hundred Dollars for any case of Deafness (caused by catarrh) that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. Send for circular, free.

F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, O. Sold by Druggists, 75c. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

When a tricky jockey holds the reins the race isn't always to the swift.

Pain's Cure is the best medicine we ever used for all affections of the throat and lungs.—Wm. O. ENDLEY, Vanburien, Ind., Feb. 10, 1900.

Some men are so very good that it is a question what they are good for.

Magnetic Starch is the very best laundry starch in the world.

More Mexican Explorations.

Professor Frederick Starr, of the University of Chicago, with a photographer and guide, has gone on another visit of investigation among the unknown tribes of Mexico. He will be absent half a year, and expects to complete with his journey his studies of the South Mexican Indians.

What Do the Children Drink?

Don't give them tea or coffee. Have you tried the new food drink called GRAIN-O? It is delicious and nourishing, and takes the place of coffee. The more Grain-O you give the children the more health you distribute through their systems. Grain-O is made of pure grains, and when properly prepared tastes like the choice grades of coffee, but costs about 1/4 as much. All grocers sell it. 15c and 25c.

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"I am so Glad you are well, Dear Sister."

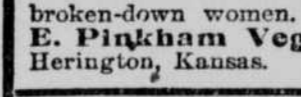


This picture tells its own story of sisterly affection. The older girl, just budding into womanhood, has suffered greatly with those irregularities and menstrual difficulties which sap the life of so many young women.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound can always be relied upon to restore health to women who thus suffer. It is a sovereign cure for the worst forms of female complaints,—that bearing-down feeling, weak back, falling and displacement of the womb, inflammation of the ovaries, and all troubles of the uterus or womb. It dissolves and expels tumors from the uterus in the early stage of development and checks any tendency to cancerous humors. It subdues excitability, nervous prostration, and tones up the entire female system.

Could anything prove more clearly the efficiency of Mrs. Pinkham's Medicine than the following strong statement of Grace Stansbury?

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—I was a sufferer from female weakness for about a year and a half. I have tried doctors and patent medicines, but nothing helped me. I underwent the horrors of local treatment, but received no benefit. My ailment was pronounced ulceration of the womb. I suffered from intense pains in the womb and ovaries, and the backache was dreadful. I had leucorrhoea in its worst form. Finally, I grew so weak I had to keep my bed. The pains were so hard as to almost cause spasms. When I could endure the pains no longer, I was given morphine. My memory grew short and I gave up all hope of getting well. Thus I dragged along. To please my sister I wrote to Mrs. Pinkham for advice. Her answer came, but meantime I was taken worse and was under the doctor's care for a while. "After reading Mrs. Pinkham's letter, I concluded to try her medicine. After taking two bottles I felt much better; but after using six bottles I was cured. All of my friends think my cure almost miraculous. I thank you very much for your timely advice and wish you prosperity in your noble work, for surely it is a blessing to broken-down women. I have full and complete faith in the Lydia E. Pinkham Vegetable Compound."—GRACE B. STANSBURY, Herington, Kansas.



GRACE B. STANSBURY

\$5000 REWARD Owing to the fact that some skeptical people have from time to time questioned the genuineness of the testimonial letters we are constantly publishing, we have deposited with the National City Bank, of Lynn, Mass., \$5,000, which will be paid to any person who will show that the above testimonial is not genuine, or was published before obtaining the writer's special permission.—LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO.

When it comes to word painting the sign painter is at the top of the ladder.

Every time a man's wife looks happy he flatters himself that he is the cause of it.

No man ever expects his wife to make as many mistakes as he does.

Use Magnetic Starch—it has no equal.

No matter how tall a man is he is not above criticism.

Bilious—Got a Cold?

You're bilious, got a cold, you have a throbbing sensation in your head, a bad taste in your mouth, your eyes burn, your skin is yellow with dark rings under your eyes, your lips are parched and you feel ugly and mean, as if you wanted to kick a lame infant or kill a canary bird. Your system is full of bile not properly passed off, and what you need is a cleaning up inside. Don't continue being a bilious nuisance to yourself and those who love you, but send out at once for a box of CASCARETS and work off the cold while you sleep.

Be sure you get CASCARETS! Don't let them sell you a false substitute.

son December 4, 1783.

of "I have used your valuable CASCARETS and find them perfect. Couldn't do without them. I have used them for some time for indigestion and biliousness and am now completely cured. Recommend them to every one. Once tried, you will never be without them in the family." EDW. A. MARX, Albany, N. Y.

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THEY WORK WHILE YOU SLEEP

10c. 25c. 50c. NEVER SOLD IN BULK. DRUGGISTS

THIS IS THE TABLET

GUARANTEED TO CURE: Four years ago the first box of CASCARETS was sold. Now it has sold six million boxes a year, greater than any similar medicine in the world. This is absolute proof of great merit, and our best testimonial. We have faith, and will sell CASCARETS absolutely guaranteed to cure or money refunded. Go buy today, two 50c boxes, give them a fair, honest trial, as per simple directions, and if you are not satisfied after using one 50c box, return the unused 50c box and the empty box to us by mail, or the druggist from whom you purchased it, and get your money back for both boxes. Take our advice—no matter what ails you—start today. Health will quickly follow and you will bless the day you first started the use of CASCARETS. Book free by mail. Add: STRICKLAND BROS., 347 North Dearborn St., Chicago.