

A TANGLE OF TELEGRAMS.

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

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Mr. Bolton figures in this narrative as the stony hearted parent of a beautiful daughter. Most people know him only as I. Eugene Bolton, druggists' sundries, John street, New York.

"Bertha," said he one day to the beautiful daughter aforesaid, "I do not like George Hallett."

"Neither do I, father," replied the dutiful child. "I love him!"

This brief and pointed colloquy was the climax of many conversations. It stated a situation not at all unusual, but just as difficult for the persons involved as if it had never figured in history or romance.

George was the New York manager of Girard Freres et Cie, a Paris firm dealing in silks. It was a responsible position for a very young man, and George was making quite a bit of money. It was not his prospects to which Mr. Bolton objected; in fact, his principal accusation was that George was "one of those handsome men who al-



"YOU CAN SEE A COPY OF IT HERE."

ways have 500 silly women chasing after them." He did not wish to see his daughter join the procession.

Besides, Mr. Bolton preferred Irving Meade, a young man who stood in the shadow of a fortune and had recently come into Mr. Bolton's employ that he might be kept from idleness while the fortune's shadow was becoming solid and substantial. Mr. Meade was not a handsome man or much pursued by sighing maidens, despite his prospective wealth. To Bertha he was a joke.

The Boltons lived in Englewood, N. J. A widowed sister of Mrs. Bolton, Mrs. Laura Merriam, resided in New York. The relations between her and the Boltons were not cordial, except as to Bertha, who was a favorite with Mrs. Merriam. As the widow was wealthy, Mr. and Mrs. Bolton viewed this intimacy with favor.

Now, it happened that occasionally Bertha would receive a telegram like this:

Meet me at Twenty-third street, Sixth avenue "L" station, up town side, 12 tomorrow.

Laura Merriam.

From Mrs. Merriam? Oh, no—from George! Bertha could show these messages to her mother and use them as an excuse for going to town without the least fear of discovery, for Mrs. Bolton and Mrs. Merriam would probably not meet within six months. So Bertha and George were enabled to enjoy many luncheons together in the swellest restaurants and usually a matinee at the theater afterward.

It was on a Tuesday that George sent a message couched in the exact language of the sample given above. Bertha was not at home when the messenger boy arrived, so the telegram was answered to Mrs. Bolton, who read it. She knew that it was Bertha's habit to answer these telegrams from "aunt," and she also knew that Bertha would not return home till quite late in the evening, as she was to take dinner at the house of a friend. Such being the case and as she was sure that Bertha could go to town on the following day, she sent away this reply by the boy who had brought the message:

Mrs. Merriam, 98 West Street, New York: Yes. Tomorrow, 12, Sixth avenue and Twenty-third street.

Bertha.

When Mrs. Merriam received this, she did not know what "yes" meant and was inclined to regard it as an error of the telegrapher's. The important part of the message, however, was clear—Bertha wanted to meet her tomorrow at noon at Sixth avenue and Twenty-third street.

It must be understood that shopping appointments of this kind had sometimes been made between them.

When Bertha learned that her mother had answered the telegram, she was somewhat disturbed in mind. She decided to telegraph George on the following day telling him to make the time 11:45 instead of 12. Thus they could meet and George could get out of the way before Mrs. Merriam should arrive. If aunt should come, it would spoil the afternoon for Bertha and George; if she didn't, Bertha would know where to find George, who would be waiting, and an ingenious note of explanation would satisfy Mrs. Merriam's mind in regard to the telegram.

A little before 10 o'clock Wednesday forenoon Bertha entered the Englewood telegraph office, intending to send her message to George.

"I've just sent a telegram for you up

to your house," said the operator. "You can see a copy of it here, though."

Bertha read as follows:

Make it 1:30 instead of 12. Unavoidable.

Laura Merriam.

There was a nice situation. Was this dispatch from her aunt or from George? She puzzled over the question for several minutes and finally decided that the expression, "Make it 1:30," stamped the communication as the work of a man.

Therefore it would be useless to telegraph to George. She could meet her aunt first and George later. All things were falling out well. It was a considerable annoyance, however, to find, on reaching the railroad station, that she had just missed the train which she had intended to take. The time which she had spent in puzzling over that message had accomplished this misfortune—it was impossible to reach the appointed place by 12. Aunt Laura, in the picturesque language of the period, would be "stood up," but to meet George at 1:30 would be easy.

As the old-fashioned novelists used to say, let us leave Bertha waiting in the railroad station while we follow the fortunes of her father.

When I. Eugene Bolton reached his office that morning about 9 o'clock, he discovered that he had left certain important documents at home. He needed them that day, and at first he had it in mind to telegraph his wife to send them in by Bertha.

"That's what I'll do," said he to Irving Meade, who had been present while Bolton was searching his pockets for the papers. "I'll have Bertha bring them in."

"Is Bertha coming here today?" asked the young man in a voice that betrayed his joy.

"She wasn't coming here," replied Bolton. "She was going shopping with her aunt, Mrs. Merriam."

"Mrs. Merriam telegraphed her, I suppose?" said Meade in a peculiar tone.

"Why, yes," said Bolton. "How did you know that?"

"Mr. Bolton," responded the young man impressively, "I've been on to that game for some time."

"What game?" cried the head of the firm.

"That telegram wasn't from Mrs. Merriam. It was from George Hallett!"

"Caesar's ghost!" exclaimed Bolton. "What do you mean?"

"I know a fellow in the telegraph office in Englewood," replied Meade. "I know where the answers are addressed when those 'shopping' messages come to Bertha."

"You do, eh? Well, why didn't you tell me before?"

"I didn't feel like doing it," answered the young man. "I didn't want to get Bertha into trouble."

"There's going to be trouble if what you say is true," said Bolton. "I'll be at Sixth avenue and Twenty-third street at noon today myself."

"That is where they are to meet, is it?" said Meade.

"It's where several people are going to meet," responded Bolton, "and one of them will have a club with him."

"I think it would be very unfortunate, sir," said Meade, "if your daughter were present at such a scene. It might get into the papers."

"You're right," replied Bolton. "But what can I do?"

"Telegraph her—using Mrs. Merriam's name—not to come till later. Then go up there and meet Hallett alone."

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Bolton waited awhile to make sure that Hallett was not coming, and then he took a train down town.

"A nice fool's errand you sent me on!" he yelled at Meade when the two were again in Bolton's private office. And he told the story of his adventure.

"I'll bet you \$1,000 to a cent," exclaimed Meade, "that I am not mistaken about this. She must have got your telegram and sent some sort of reply to Hallett. He'll be there at 1:30, sure."

"I'd like to know whether there is anything in this," said Bolton doubtfully.

"Go up there, and you'll see," said Meade. And he finally persuaded his employer to go.

The instant that Bolton passed the threshold Meade ran out by another way. He did not purpose to have any mistake this time. He knew that Bertha would be at the rendezvous, and he decided to make sure about Hallett. Such a scene as must result would be directly in his interest, though he would have preferred that Bertha should not be present. He feared the effect of her persuasive eloquence upon her father, who really loved her with all his heart, and would be in danger of forgiving Satan himself if Bertha should plead for him. However, the chances were that Hallett's case would be settled forever.

So Meade dodged into a telegraph office and wrote out a message to Hallett in Bertha's name making the appointment at the place and hour already mentioned.

"Send this," said he to the operator in charge of the telegraph station, "and say that a young lady left it in a great hurry."

Then he gave the operator half a dollar and ran out. By good leg work he got ahead of Bolton at the Cortlandt street station of the elevated road. Arrived at Twenty-third street, he took up a position on the opposite side from that where the lovers and the late father were to meet. He could see well enough from the windows of the waiting room across the tracks. At least that was the best place that he dared to take. He would not have missed a glimpse of the scene for any reasonable sum of money.

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"WHERE'S BERTHA? I HOPE SHE ISN'T ILL."

Mrs. Merriam's telegram on the day before. He supposed that Bertha had done so, and, believing Meade's story, he supposed that the reply had gone to Hallett.

Therefore he was very much surprised, as he got upon the elevated railroad platform at the appointed hour, to see Mrs. Merriam waiting there.

"Where's Bertha?" asked that lady, approaching him. "I hope she isn't ill?"

"No," said Bolton, feeling very foolish and cursing Meade in his heart, "she isn't ill, but she couldn't possibly come in today, and as I was to be here at about the hour named she asked me to tell you about it."

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

TALK OF EXTRA SESSION FOR THE BENEFIT OF CUBA.

Fillibusters Doing Their Utmost to Defeat Shipping Bill—If Allowed to Come to a Vote, It Will Surely Pass. Premature Jubilation.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30.—Talk of an extra session, which it was thought had been abandoned, has been revived, and some very good reasons are advanced to show that it may be a necessity. The Cuban constitution will not be in shape to be presented to the United States until after the adjournment of congress, although by the middle of March it is expected that it will be ready. By some it is considered as pretty hard upon Cuba to suggest that her constitution be held up for nearly a year and that meanwhile the status of the Cubans and especially their independence has not been established.

The statement is made in private conferences that there is no real disposition to give Cuba her full independence. This is a base aspersion on the honor of the United States. Before the war with Spain was begun the pledge was distinctly made that Cuba should be free, and she will be, just as quickly as is possible, in an orderly and dignified manner. In most cases the suggestion of an American protectorate over Cuba or of annexing the island to the United States is made by those who desire to exploit that rich country for their own individual benefits.

The president's illness, while it has at no time been in any way serious, has greatly weakened him, so much so that he is yet unable to attend to anything that is not urgent public necessity. This has necessitated a postponement, if not an abandonment, of all social functions, much to the dismay of society and those on pleasure bent. But governments exist, not for the enjoyment of the fashionable, but for conserving the welfare of the masses.

One after another the appropriation bills are emerging from senate committees and are being placed upon the calendar for consideration. The legislative appropriation and the Indian appropriation bills have been disposed of, and the shipping bill is filling in all the gaps, so as to bring the measure as speedily to a vote as is possible. Senators Vest and Depew have spoken, and Senators Chandler and Mason, it is said, are ready and may have delivered their speeches before this reaches the reader's eye. It is said that Senators Berry, Cockrell, Bacon and possibly Clay again will speak in opposition, and even Senator Teller is expected to speak for a few minutes in order to show why he voted for a ship subsidy bill ten years ago and refuses to vote for a better bill now.

Senators Pettigrew, Butler and one or two others are said to have carefully planned a scheme of filibustering sure to defeat every attempt to bring the bill to a vote. It is conceded by everybody that if the bill comes to a vote it will be passed. It is also conceded that those senators who nursed in silence their fears that the bill contained bad features and who, when they came into the light with their objections, were met with a readiness on the part of the bill's friends to accept amendments that would set their fears at rest, are the ones to whom in the end the defeat of the bill must be laid if it be defeated, and it cannot be defeated by a vote, but only by preventing it from reaching a vote.

Meanwhile the foreign shipping lobby is jubilant, professing to have the most positive assurances that the bill cannot come to a vote in the senate. Considering that these people, or those they represent, have \$175,000,000 a year at stake in the matter, their concern can be imagined. That they may be jubilating prematurely is more than possible; it is likely, as the real friends of the bill—and these include the most powerful senators—say that the bill ought to and will pass before adjournment at this session.

The free trade and the Democratic press of the country that is bitterly hostile to Senator Hanna is beginning to crow over the defeat of "his pet measure," but Senator Hanna only smiles complacently.

Senator Hanna is a target for the abuse of every free trade newspaper in the United States, not because of his connection with the shipping bill, which they use as their text for attacking him, but because he is the most remarkably successful man in the Republican party today.

The shipping bill is not framed to enrich anybody; its purpose is to give the people of the United States a substantial assurance that their exports will go to their foreign markets, whatever may happen to the nations of Europe, and, besides this, to give the United States a means of defense in the ever possible emergency of war.

The shipping bill's passage means the eventual retention in the United States of the \$200,000,000 now paid annually by our people to foreign shipowners; its defeat means an indefinite continuance of the foreign monopoly of our foreign carrying and an unending drain upon our national resources or our gold with which to pay our ocean freight bill in foreign countries.

J. B. M.

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"You do, eh? Well, why didn't you tell me before?"

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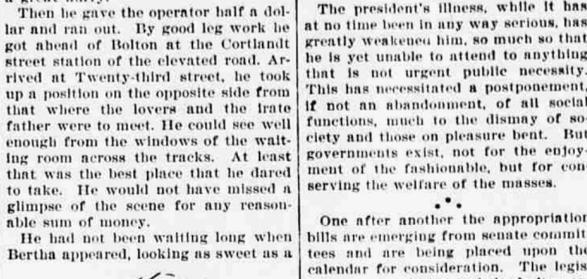
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rose and as happy as a bird. Five minutes, ten minutes, passed. Where was Hallett? Where was Bolton? Twelve minutes, then 13—ominous number. An up town train stopped at the station, and at the same moment a down town train rushed in, blocking the vision of the jealous lover. When he could see across the tracks again, Bertha and George were greeting each other in a manner much more than cordial.

But where was Mr. Bolton? Meade asked that question of his own tormented heart, and there was no reply.

Bertha and George began to move toward the stairs leading to the street. If they mingled with the throng below, Mr. Bolton might search for them in vain. He was helpless to avert a calamity that he himself had wrought. It was he that had sent or inspired the messages that had resulted in this meeting.

Scarcely knowing what he did, Meade ran out of the waiting room and dashed down the stairs. Reaching the street, he looked across Sixth avenue, and there were Bertha and George getting into a hansom. There was no way for him to stop them, but he rushed across the avenue as if all depended upon his haste. The hansom was well under way as he reached the foot of the "L" road station's stair on the up town side of the avenue. He leaned against the structure and gasped.

A hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he heard the voice of Mr. Bolton asking what in the name of all the fends at once he was doing there.

"They've driven away in a hansom!" cried the excited young man. "Chase them!"

"Now, look here," said Bolton, restraining him. "If you think I'm going to believe any more of your lies, you don't know me. My daughter hasn't been here, and Hallett hasn't been here, and I can prove it. Look at this telegram. It was handed to me just as I rushed out of the office, but I forgot to open it till a half minute ago."

Meade looked and read this:

Laura telegraphs me it 1:30, same place. Bertha left before message arrived. Meet her at 12 and tell her.

It was signed by Mrs. Bolton.

"So, you see," said the stern parent, "Bertha had no reason to be here at 1:30, and, of course, Hallett wouldn't have been. Meade, I begin to see through you. You're a jealous jackass! And I had picked you for my son-in-law! The thought makes me modest. I reckon Bertha couldn't have done worse. It'll be just like me to let her suit herself after this experience, and if she wants George Hallett, why, by the jumping jingo, she shall have him!"

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W. W. KOLLER, Asst. Manager Expressman's Del. Co.

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