A Chirographical Coincidence.

The morning mail had just been delivered at the office of the *Crescent*, in whose contents the editor was immediately engrossed. Suddenly, a change came over the editorial equilibrium, as of conscious impudence. A quick light flashed from those clear brown eyes of hers, in a perfect blaze. For, be it known, that the editor of the *Crescent* was a lady, amiable and accomplished—handsome withal. One to attract, better still, one on whom reliance could be placed in times of emergency.

She was not young—so to speak, neither was she old, nor in the slightest degree *passe*. The estimate of the *Crescent* was at the very height of her womanhood and of her power. The object of her displeasure at this moment, was a letter, in an ordinary appearing letter, in fashionable cream envelope. This letter was unhesitatingly laid aside, and with the seal unbroken. The slender fingers may have trembled a little, but they were under the less relentless of purpose. Resuming her occupation, her brow cleared, and, in the press of business, the circumstance was forgotten.

A month from this date another letter, also in cream envelope, and in the same handwriting, came to the editor's hand. With like business like exactness, this letter, still unopened, was placed beside its fellow of the month previous. Evidently the handwriting was recognized by her, and from circumstances best known to herself, especially offensive. In a week's time there arrived another, until at length, a score of these cream envelopes had piled one upon another. But with the advent of the fifth missive, the editor of the *Crescent* became roused to a sense of indignation amounting to persecution, and called for prompt measures of suppression. Deliberately enclosing the five letters in an express package, superscribed to Rowland Browne, Jr., Brownville, Wisconsin, she once more dismissed the subject from her mind.

The county seat of Brownville, Wisconsin, had but recently adjourned, followed by a state of quietude, which for the past two weeks had been unbroken by judgeship business, but known to the fraternity, the most unimportant suits had been continued to the September term. Therefore, there August administrators of justice were not disposed with a sense of having done their whole duty, toward themselves and their fellowmen.

Rowland Browne, Jr., was no exception to the prevailing dullness, upon this warm July afternoon. True, he had made a decided hit in his fourth of July oration, without a doubt his chances for congressional nomination from that district were fairly assured; socially he was popular. He was a jolly good fellow, every body agreed. A human, flesh and blood kind of man; one, none too good for earth, and yet not unfit for heaven. But Rowland Browne, *Jr.*, felt in the depths of his soul, that a wast. Life seemed objectless. What was he living for, anyway? Ambition was good so far as it went, but ambition was only a part of his life. His nature was sympathetic, and he delighted in the everyday amenities of living. He was just thirty two, and, ha! his office at this moment was like a shelter settlement, ready to be ready it wore a grimy, neglected appearance. However this had happened, he had never inquired. It seemed natural, had been quite different. There was Henrietta Seymour, suddenly remembered. He had acted like a scoundrel, as she regarded that affair, connected with Prof. J. She would listen to an explanation, then, and on his return from Yale she was gone. The family had returned to the East, they said. Anyway, he had lost all clew to her. "But I swear!" he exclaimed, in a burst of emotion, "I was as innocent as an infant of wrong toward her."

He had never seen a girl quite like Henrietta Seymour; those clear, direct eyes of hers were a constant reproach to him; he could not escape them. She was what he called "talented," every one acknowledged that. He, Prof. J., admired her, so did I; and how shameful! know the old curmudgeon would not let me marry her! He should have been content with science and let love alone; it wasn't a good combination. That one can't do two things at once, is a wise maxim. Well, I never quite understood the matter; never shall, now.

Roland Browne, *Jr.*, it was very evident, was fast approaching the confines of sentimentalism this quiet July afternoon. A bumble-bee noisily explored the nooks and corners of his office slighting upon the bust of Lincoln above the book-case. "Well," he said, retrospectively, "old Abe stood the sling of many a marauder's beak unmoved, simple, and grand to the last."

"But shoo! get out there," a palm leaf in his hand, Rowland Browne, *Jr.*, addressed himself to pursue the offender to the doorway. "What's the use of screens I'd like to know, anyway. Hello! William, letters? A good-send! lay them on the table there, and begone, William, drive that nearly bumble-bee out of these sacred precincts, sacred to law and order, eh?"

Seating himself to his more agreeable occupation, half an hour after letter was scanned and placed on file for immediate reference, a glass of wine, as the case might require. The last remaining document proved to be somewhat bulky. "Law papers—that Smith affair." But no; the superscription attracts his attention by a kind of magnetism; "this is no client's document." Starting from the lounging position in which he had thrown himself, he examined it carefully. "Henrietta's handwriting, I could swear, I should know it among a thousand; it's characteristic with a vengeance—severely characteristic, as I have good cause for remembering. A certain note received in times past, every pen-stroke of which was barbed with scorn, renders me peculiarly sensitive to the subject.

"But, what! one, two, three, four, five letters, and directed to the editor of the *Crescent*. The devil! and unopened at that. What does it mean? the superscription appears to be mine—plain as daylight. But why should it must be that I am either a clairvoyant, or a lunatic, or a somnambulist at the very best. I may be all, or any of them, for ought I know; it looks like it. With which supposing I send to the *Crescent* hypothetically, I will take the liberty of opening letter first; dated May 15, 1888, postmark undecipherable. Here goes."

"EDITOR OF THE CRESCENT:

"DEAR SIR: Does anyone the Mr. which I assume you have decided to reject as not quite suitable for your paper, as soon as convenient. I am about starting for Eau Gres, a small town adjoining this, for a visit, and would like to dispose of my manuscript in some way before going. Can you take it with me. I hope in the future to improve upon this poor effort, and trust you will have trouble you.

"Very respectfully,

"LIDA LETITIA LATHROP."

"Well, this is too bad—it is pathetic. I'll send her a whole package of stomps, at once."

"Letter fifth, July 3.

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"DEAR SIR: As you know, thus far, I have been very patient in the matter of the Ms., but it is said there are limits to every one's endurance, and I must confess my patience is at an end. I never set very stability—very magnanimously. I would like you to publish my poem here I sent about it. But after this letter I will no longer trouble you. In the interim I shall be expected visiting your city, and if not meantime received, will then call for the Ms. myself.

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"Yes, mother, I know; but wait till I sell the manuscript. Don't get discouraged, mother. Mrs. Biggs said last night she should probably go Monday week, if Janey is better—and if, and if! But I shall be ready, whenever she is—I must be, the fate of nations depends upon it—to me."

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"Letter fourth, June 28."

"EDITOR OF THE CRESCENT.

"DEAR SIR: I am becoming very much discouraged in regard to my Ms. I need it so very much. If you only knew how important it is to me, I am sure you would be more prompt in returning it. I had not already enclosed stamps I would again. But to tell the truth, I really need all my money—I really have none to throw away. Do, please, let me hear from you as soon as this reaches you.

"Very truly,

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The village of Whiteside Junction, Indiana, at noontide of a warm July day, was significant of a profound repose. One small dwelling, however, of tasteful appearance, situated near the turnpike road leading eastward, showed signs of life and activity. A young girl was busily engaged in the arrangement of a wardrobe.

"Mother," she called, from the chamber above, with its small paned windows and low ceiling, "I hate to take from you this remnant of past splendor, your only remaining silk. What if you should want it yourself some day? It seems almost sacrilegious, of the past, plaiting and shirring its richness in accordance with the present fashion. I ought not to take it, mother."

"Nonsense, Lida," replied Mrs. Lathrop, "who else should have it but my only daughter? I always intended it for you, only that, heretofore, there has been no occasion for wearing it. We have lived so like hermits here in this out-of-the-way place; you with your teaching and your studies, and I, so poorly calculated to brave the world—and, poverty, Lida."

"Yes, mother, I know; but wait till I sell the manuscript. Don't get discouraged, mother. Mrs. Biggs said last night she should probably go Monday week, if Janey is better—and if, and if! But I shall be ready, whenever she is—I must be, the fate of nations depends upon it—to me."

"Yes Lida."

"This purple brocade is most too handsome I'm afraid for a literary woman. I think I might be classed among the *literati*, don't you think so? The article I wrote on the Ms. was copied in all the papers, I mean in this vicinity; and, if you can secure that manuscript, on which I particular pride myself! by going, I shall feel repaid. I cannot get over, Lida, the strangeness of receiving stamps from an entire stranger in Wisconsin. He begged me to believe that it was all right, Lida, and that he was indebted to me for that amount. I can't understand it at all."

"Yes," repeated Mrs. Lathrop, "it does seem strange."

"How fortunate it is that I selected a gray hat this spring," resumed Lida, "it just matches this brown. I do hope I shall be able to change the subject, that that editor has not lost my manuscript, Editors, I have heard, are very autocratic, book your hat out of your bonnet if you dare question them. But I shall insist upon having my manuscript."

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"Fashion!" exclaimed Mrs. Lathrop.

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"Well, my child, try to be content with your lot."

"Mother, dear, don't please say such discouraging things. If I never succeed I should never accomplish anything. It is the 'divine discontent' by which we are fully developed. I am sorry I shall never be content; I have not the temperament for it. I am terribly grasping disposition; but most of all, mother, I have an intense longing for change. I cannot endure the monotony, except that we have lived here so very long."

"True, Lida, there are many reasons for our abiding in Whiteside Junction."

"Yes, I know," she assented very quietly.

"In that Mrs. Deacon Smith coming down the road!" exclaimed Lida, "I think it will still step out and see about the sweet corn; she partly promised to dry some for us."

Lida laughed lightly. "What a mania we have here in Indiana, for hoodwinking mother; we seem always to be hobnobbing with coming events, we get the start of every thing."

"Are we peculiar in this respect?" returned Mrs. Lathrop. "I think not."

It was about the middle of August day in the editorial sanctum of the *Crescent*. The editor, Mrs. Henrietta Johnson, sat in an attitude of absolute listlessness. She had had a perplexing day of it. The chirographical coincidence had been none of the best; for some reason their articles lacked point, assumes; they had not been conducted in accordance with the demands of the times. The coming issue of the *Crescent*, she feared, would not prove a success.

A gentle ring at the office door roused her. A young lady prettily dressed in gray, accompanied by a sunshiny, happy countenance. The young lady taking precedence, inquired if she could see the editor.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Henrietta Johnson. "I am the editor."

"Oh, I am so glad. I am Lida Letitia Lathrop of Whiteside Junction; but, of course, you may not remember my name, and yet I have written to you so often."

"Have you! No, I am afraid I do not remember."

"It was about an article I sent you entitled 'Misunderstanding,' you thought it was not up to the standard of your paper, I presume, and I wrote to have it returned" explained the young lady. "It needed a very copy, I could have disposed of it, if you had obliged me by returning it. I wrote five letters."

"Five letters!" exclaimed Mrs. Henrietta Johnson, "Five letters!" A bright color mounting to cheek and brow in realization of the whole subject. "Did you say five letters?" she demanded with indignation.

"I am almost sure there were five," answered Lida, fearing she had committed an unpardonable error. "I know I never received any stability—very magnanimously. I would like you to publish my poem here I sent about it. But after this letter I will no longer trouble you. In the interim I shall be expected visiting your city, and if not meantime received, will then call for the Ms. myself.

"Very truly,

"LIDA LETITIA LATHROP."

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