Her Birthday.

EAREST ETHEL," his letter began. He had never written to her this way before, but he was feeling perhaps a bit reckless that night, and willing to take the consequences. The girl had never treated him on anything more than a very friendly basis, and that was what he told himself again and again, as his thoughts ceaselessly recurred to the bright blue eyes and laughing face that had so completely fascinated him. He acknowledged to himself that she could not possibly have found in him any qualities more worthy of her notice than in the countless other men she knew, and yet he could not always satisfy himself that in her inmost heart she really held for him only the commonplace feelings of "good friendship." Good friendship with her was something he could not be satisfied with now, for his own sentiments told him every hour that the feelings he entertained were far from being of such a Platonic character. His emotions were not to be mistaken. He loved to be near her. The touch of her hand thrilled him. The magic of her smile told him that for her sake he would do anything. He delighted to walk by her house at night when she was all unconscious of his presence, and, in his sentimental way, he almost wished for a fire, for burglars, for any sort of calamity that would afford him an opportunity to show his bravery, to attest his devotion. In short, Arthur Tisdale's passion was palpable enough.

He had just penned the superscription to the letter. It was just a bit of a note which he was sending with a bunch of roses on her birthday. The box and the letter having been duly dispatched by the messenger boy, Tisdale settled himself back in his easychair.

A little reflection soon convinced him that he had gone too far in calling her "dearest." No word of affection had ever passed between them, and his mind instantly pictured all manner of distressing ways in which, as a reward for his impetuousness, she might intimate that their friendship might as well be discontinued. He was a sensitive man, and apt to magnify the importance of casual things; moreover, this was his first affaire, and he never happened to think that perhaps the magnificent roses that accompanied his note might serve to palliate his offense in the use of the superlative. And so in his ignorance he cursed himself for a fool, and evolved all manner of schemes for overtaking the messenger before the accursed note should be delivered.

But fidgeting over anticipated complications, and trying to find a way out of his imagined difficulties proved a nerve-wearing pastime, so seizing his hat and coat, he started out. Across Newbury Street he hurried, into Exeter, and up Beacon, till at length, before he realized where his footsteps had been tending, he found himself at her door. In an instant his mind was made. A nervous ring, and he was ushered into the drawing room, where he awaited her with trembling heart. At last she came, beautifully gowned, and holding in her hand an envelope which his quick eye instantly recognized.

"I have just received your lovely flowers," she said, kindly, while he suffered the indescribable tortures of the anxious seat. "I hardly think you realized what you were doing," she added, with a furtive twinkle in her eye, which he failed to notice.