THE successful drilling of Drake’s well in 1859 brought many adventurous young men in search of their fortunes to the oil country of Pennsylvania. Each had his own reason to seek his fortune in the unfriendly environment of the Pennsylvania wilderness. Timothy Kelly’s reason was to prove his worth to Rose Shannon of Niagara Falls, Ontario, and to win her hand. He felt strongly that it was a man’s obligation to provide for his wife and he was determined to make his fortune before they married.

Tim was 23 years old when he set out for Tidioute, Pennsylvania, and his third start at a career. Two years earlier he had been reading law at the bar in Buffalo, New York, when he was called home to Niagara Falls, Ontario, to care for his mother and two sisters upon the death of his father. His mother and a sister died within a few months and Tim stayed on and opened a general store. However, running a store was a slow way to wealth for an ambitious young man while men with luck were becoming wealthy almost overnight in the oil fields of Pennsylvania. Early in February 1861, Tim made a trip to Tidioute to explore the possibilities there. He decided to return home, sell his stock of goods from the store, and try his luck in the oil fields.¹

Rose was in Detroit visiting relatives for the winter and returned home to Niagara Falls in Spring 1861. Tim’s letters to her before he departed Niagara Falls and during his year in Tidioute and Oil City chronicle their stormy courtship but also provide us with a first hand account of life in the oil country.²

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¹ Tim was a prolific letter writer and about 200 of his letters written during the early days of his courtship with Rose, his time in the oil country, and his service in the Union Army are extant. Much of the information known about Tim and his family was learned from these letters, as well as from city directories and census records.

² Timothy Kelly’s letters have been in the family’s possession since his death in 1880.
My Dear Rose

I have deferred writing to you thus long in order that I might be able to tell you something definite about my movements.

You heard from me last from Erie on my way to the oil country, about four hours after I wrote we took a train for Pittsfield on the Sunbury & Erie R.R. it was a freight train and we were all day lumbering along about sixty miles. remained in Pittsfield over night and the next day went in a sleigh about twelve miles over the mountains to Tidioute, the City of oil. Tidioute is a long straggling village situated in the Alleghany valley. a splendid panorama lay beneath us from the mountain summit at which we arrived before descending to the river. wildly picturesque now, it must be glorious in summer. we found this little out of the way village an indescribable scene of confusion and excitement. every one talked of oil, everybody smelled of oil, everything was smeared with oil. the air was laden with oil the earth saturated with it. just think of it, you lease a claim about as large as a good sized room, drill a hole, from two to three hundred feet deep, and pump out from one to five hundred dollars worth of oil a day. of course there are many failures. it takes a good deal of money to sink a well, and a man of small means may ruin himself in the operation, but I think the chances are worth the risk.

There are but three small taverns in the place, and they are full to overflowing. I was one of ten unfortunates who endeavored to sleep on the floor of a very small parlor. the Bar room floor was covered people slept in the Hall on the stairs on chairs and tables, in short every available space was occupied. and then at meal time the rush was prodigious. no one got enough to eat, while many could gratify but the senses of seeing & smelling for their money.

I remained in Tidioute from Tuesday to Saturday morning long enough to become thoroughly infected with the oil (don't be alarmed it is not contagious enough to be conveyed in a letter) fever. I was four or five hours in Erie on Saturday night. I saw your brother in Mr. Goodwin's saloon. he is well and likes Erie very much but thinks he will go to New York in May. early on Sunday morning I reached
Buffalo & had to tramp through slush and mud six miles to my brother's place. I was completely used up and took a straight sleep of about sixteen hours.

I got home on Monday and since then I have been trying to sell out to Maria and have at last succeeded (it was to inform you of the result that I deferred writing) in about ten days I will bid a long farewell to the Falls—that is as a place of residence—and then for a bold struggle for Fortune. if I find oil I will be wealthy, if I do not, poor as I am now, I will be much worse, there it is said "a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune. who knows but that this may be to me the full flood of that tide, and the wealth I longed for in my early letters to you be no moonshine after all. the thought of getting away from the drudgery of a paltry grocery, doling out quarts of whiskey and ounces of nutmegs, makes me feel like throwing up my hat and shouting. . . .

. . . this letter is all about myself and my business and you may think that I should not trouble you on such subjects, but I feel that it is my duty to keep you informed on subjects that concern you as much as me, and I feel also that you should look upon it in that way, and feel as much interested as you would in any project of your own. I know that I do not write as I did six months ago. my letters have become matter of fact affairs, the reason is obvious. I do not write to you as a lover, but as a husband,3 and my letters relate to our mutual interest. Still if it is distasteful to you do not hesitate to tell me so and I will guard against it in future. . . . be sure to write to me soon as you receive this. if I have to go away without hearing from you I shall consider it ominous of diaster, and don't forget to pray that our enterprise in Tidioute may be successful.

Good night my girl
Truly yours
T.W.K.

It has occurred to me several times to make an extraordinary request. it must seem very absurd to you. you may think the oil fever has affected my brain but notwithstanding all that I have determined

3 Tim referred to himself as Rose's husband long before they were married in April 1864. He offered his own explanation of this liberty in a letter dated Jan. 6, 1861: "you have allowed me to call you so in anticipation but have I not a right to do so. it is mutual love and faith that gives to marriage a record in Heaven without such it is but an empty name, its vow a mockery and a lie. I would consider a violation of my promise now as criminal as when it has worldly confirmation."
during the last fifteen minutes during which I have been thinking about it, to prefer it. I am of a temperament that drinking liquor or smoking injures very much. still all my good resolutions I find are but ropes of sand in restraining me in the way of temptation. Not that I often drink to excess, but even a very little does me injury. in Tidioute like all places of the sort it is nothing but drink from morning till night, and I am afraid of the consequences to my health if I go there without more restraint than I can place upon myself. but a promise to you would be more sacred than an oath. I know you will laugh, the absurdity of the plan is what prevented me long ago from resorting to it, but the necessity for it now has overcome that—

My Dear Rose

Yours of the 18th I received yesterday, accept my thanks for answering so promptly.

You are a most eloquent advocate of Temperence. John B. Lough is dull and prosy in comparison. I promise as I love you never again to drink anything intoxicating without your consent. your request and this my promise to fulfil it is an armor that will preserve me unscathed in the fiery furnace of Tidioute. it must seem to you queer that I should ask you to make me promise thus, but it was the only restraint which I knew would be all powerful. my previous promise I always have and will continue to observe. You are not I see a tobacco hater. perhaps you were afraid I was not possessed of self control sufficient to shake off two vices at the same time.

. . . I will remember your admonition in regard to business subjects and henceforth will not suffer any of the dull realities of this work day world to thrust their leaden (or oily) faces through the golden heaven of love's young dream. if I strike a hundred barrel well I shan't say a word to you about it. . . .

I am my love
Truly Yours
T.W.K.

N. Falls Feby 23—

Tidioute March 21st 61

I received your letter this afternoon. I began to grow nervous and since Monday have assaulted both Post Offices several times every day. Tidioute is a straggling village about two miles up & down the river, the mountains on either side preventing it from expanding, with
a Post-office at each end of it. their mail arrangement is very imperfect. I was afraid your letter had been (as about half the letters directed here are) shipwrecked on the route and would be—like vessels which go down at sea, never heard of again. Welcome as your letters always are, I think I never derived more pleasure in the receipt of any previous one. there was about it a halo of home and peace, a balm to my tired spirit weary of this fever of excitement. I begin to appreciate my quiet old home as I never did before, in the rush and roar, the hurry and confusion of this noisy tavern.

I am now striving to write with scarcely room enough to move my elbows in a small room packed with men talking of oil, pumps, wells, derricks—territory, leases, claims, sites, &c., &c. a continuous click of billiard balls and an eternal clank of glasses come from the saloon. through the open door beside me, the heads of those standing, because they have no room to sit down, (a large majority) are dimly seen through a dense cloud of tobacco smoke, the product of at least two hundred cigars. I secured a chair and (lest I should lose it by going after them myself) begged of a friend to bring me ink and pen. three or four envious individuals are around me waiting till I get through, and wondering at the assurance I exhibit in occupying the table for such an unreasonable length of time. I have received two or three intimations to quit such as “most done” “I would like to write a few lines sir” &c, but I’ll let them wait a little longer.
How captious you are when I wrote about business "you'd no more of it." When I tried to talk to you as I think of you, my spirits idol, you call me flatterer. I guess you must give me a subject and I will try to write an essay on it.

I wish you would write a letter on the use of the vile weed Tobacco—I have become a furious smoker in self defense to some extent. I might as well smoke myself as inhale the fumes created by others.

Don't laugh at my obedience for I have been severely tempted. frequent bumpers at parting were suggested before I left Buffalo. Pocket pistols have been presented at me everywhere, on the cars, among the mountains when prospecting, at the mines, on the river and on the road. I have been waylaid in every imaginariable manner, for drinking men want to see their friends drink, but through the influence of that promise I have been immovable. . . .

Write to me a longer letter. anything you can say of the Falls (I don't mean the cataract) but the Vil—(I beg pardon) the City and its inhabitants will interest me. I will be in a quieter house in a day or two, where I can write undisturbed, and will send you in reply to the long letter you are going to write a letter the length of which will be beyond example—

I almost forgot to tell you that your uncle Tom G. is going into business here. his building is finished, he has gone to Erie after his goods, and will start in a few days—. . .

Yours in truth
T.W.K.

My Dear Rose

You have been expecting a letter from me, haven't you? and wondering why I didn't write, which I think I can explain to your satisfaction. I didn't get here till a week ago yesterday. from Monday till Thursday evening of last week I was away down the river, and had made up my mind to devote yesterday (Sunday) to letter writing. Saturday evening some one proposed a fishing excursion for the next day, which I agreed to join on condition that the party started early in the morning and returned by noon. this was agreed to, but we were delayed in various ways and didn't get off till nine o'clock. we crossed

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4 This was the beginning of Goodwin's Store which was in operation in Tidioute until it burned a few years ago.
the river 5 five of us and plunged into the wilderness. one who assumed to know the country—leading off as a guide, away we went through the dim aisles of the forest for I don’t know how many miles till we reached a small stream, down which we fished with but little success six or seven miles till it poured its tributary waters into Hickory Creek. here we were amply rewarded for our trouble. fast as our hooks touched the water they were seized by its eager inhabitants, till we had more than we could conveniently carry. I had lingered behind the party loth to leave a deep dark hole where the water formed an eddy under a projecting rock, which had yielded me in less than half an hour a dozen splendid trout, but the coming twilight warned me away and casting many a lingering look behind I started after my party, after following the windings of the stream for a short distance I came upon what I thought was a path, upon which through the gathering gloom I thought I could distinguish footprints. away I went as fast as the tangled underwood would permit for a couple of miles expecting evry moment to overtake my companions, but no sound disturbed the silent and I began to feel a little uneasy. they must have taken some other direction. I shouted till I was hoarse, but echo alone sent back a mocking answer. it was almost dark I was twenty miles from any house that I knew of. the shrill cry of some “varmint” added not a little to the uncom fort of my situation. I had no means of protecting myself should I be attacked by bears or wolves and numbers of those animals I had been informed were shot every year in this wilderness. I had no matches to light a fire and it was growing quite cold and beginning to rain. all this occurred to me as I stood contemplating a swamp in which my feet had disappeared, and I came to the conclu sion that it is not good for man to be alone particularly in such a situation. I shouted again till the woods rang but received no response. I was shivering with cold to go to sleep on the wet ground under the rain which was now falling fast would be the last of me. there was but one desperate alternative. I must try to get home, so with gloomy forebodings I started in as near as I could guess the direction of Tidioute. in about half an hour I reached the creek. I must cross on a small peeled tree that had fallen over about fifteen feet above the water. I had found it a difficult undertaking in daylight. it was dangerous now in the almost Egyptian darkness. I had accomplished but a few feet on my hands and knees, when I thought I heard the report of a gun. I listened a few minutes and it was repeated nearer and more distinctly. in half an hour the party came up disturbing a

5 Tidioute is located on the west bank of the Allegheny River.
bear who moved off with a surly growl. They were throughly alarmed on my account, but though all together again we were no better off. No one could suggest anything better than that we should push on at all hazard for Tidioute. and push on we did through tangled thickets of brush and briar, through swamps & creeks, over logs & stones for at least ten miles. For the first two or three miles the way was lightened by an occasional burst of laughter as some unfortunate tripping on a stone or a root pitched headlong into the darkness, but the merriment grew less frequent and more faint till we plodded along in silence. At last almost fainting from exhaustion, we came upon a tumble down hunters shanty into which we crowded, lighted with difficulty a smoky sputtering fire, round which we lounged, making ineffectual attempts to smoke wet tobacco, till three o'clock in the morning started again and arrived in Tidioute about seven o'clock completely tired out, with clothes torn and dripping wet and hands and faces scratched and bleeding. I slept till the middle of the afternoon. It is now but nine o'clock yet I can scarcely keep my eyes open. As this promises to be a long letter I will defer the conclusion of it till tomorrow. I did not think when I commenced of making such a long story of this fishing excursion, I think such an amount of excuse for a few days delay in writing ought to be sufficient to satisfy even such a captious little lady as yourself. Good-night.

Well here it is night again before I had an opportunity of finishing my letter. I have been hard at work all day assisting in putting up our shanty. we will have it ready for occupation in a few days. on Friday evening last for the first time I donned the buskins. a friend of mine from Buffalo came through this way with what he styled a Pavillion Theatre. one of his performers was taken suddenly sick. he found me about two hours before the performance and insisted that I should take the sick man's place. if I had anytime to learn my part I would have done so willingly as I think I have a little talent in that way. however I did as well as I could under the circumstances with what success it would not of course be proper for me to say.

We are I am afraid in beginning of troublous times. war's dark red bowl will be filled to overflowing in this fratricidal struggle. instead of the busy hum of peaceful industry will be heard the clang of resounding arms. it may not be long before no man can remain inactive without being branded as a coward. weak indeed must be his patriotism who would not rather lie hoof trampled on some southern battle field than live to witness the destruction of his country, the failure of freedom's miracle. should I deem it my duty to assist in sustaining the
government, I would leave behind no cause of regret, nothing to un-
nerve my arm in the struggle, had you not my darling endowed me
with the unestimable wealth of your pure heart’s love. . . . I hope you
will not retaliate for my dilatoriness but write to me soon.

Yours in truth
T.W.Kelly

Dear Rose

Tidioute, June 1, 61

It must be nearly a month since I wrote to you. it is needless to say
I expected an answer. an answer of any sort, short or long, commen-
datory or fault finding, affectionate or otherwise would be more de-
sireable than your silence. last week was I think the gloomiest of my
life. Tidioute was fast becoming a deserted village. the most sanguine
and persevering searchers after oil were losing faith in the territory in
this neighborhood. oil sites that were eagerly sought for when I came
here in which I invested nearly every cent I possessed were now
looked upon as worthless. I was at the same time quite unwell from
exposure during the fishing excursion I wrote to you about. you must
have been shocked at the seeming levity of that letter, presuming me
to be aware at the time of my sister’s death, but I did not hear of it
till nearly two weeks after. I think the spirits of the most boyant
would have been depressed in my position. strange to say your silence
was at the time a source of both pain and pleasure. I had I thought
at least one reason to be thankful—that you had become indifferent.
I was of a doomed race. we were fast disappearing, a few more years
and we would be gone and forgotten. it would be hard to fall with
your happiness dependant on my success, it would be hard to die with
your love to bless my life. I had little to desire wealth for now. I stood
within the shadow of the destroyer’s wing, gold would have no charm
for the glazing eye. it would drop unheeded from the stiffening hand.
thank God that you my betrothed who had been all of this world’s
brightness to me, would not suffer from my fate. it would be sad in-
deed to think I had bestowed nothing but pain upon her whom it
had been my only ambition to make happy. but did I deserve to be
forgotten so easily, since the hour I saw you first you have been
everything to me, of my every effort after good you have been the
inspiration, always with me, the purity of your continual presence has
shielded me from evil.

I could not think of you as a poor man’s wife. . . . such a sacrifice
of your life would bring me nothing but misery, and yet there seemed no remedy. I could not expect to wake some morning and find myself wealth. While in this dilemma I heard of the oil of Pennsylvania and the fortunes made in its pursuit. Hundreds of older and wiser men were carried away by the excitement. No wonder that I should seize upon the only means that presented itself of acquiring rapid wealth. Like a gambler prompted by my love for you I risked—not much certainly—but all I possessed—upon the turn of card, and though I failed I deserved your sympathy—it was thus I felt and thought last week.

"I could not think of you as a poor man's wife . . . such a sacrifice of your life would bring me nothing but misery."

had things continued to look as hopeless I would not have written, but the clouds are breaking away a little and all may come right yet. I was about to explain to you what caused the loss and what the partial restoration of confidence, but I will not weary you with what would be entirely uninteresting. I was about to pronounce a eulogy upon Hope but that I will also refrain from. While her beacon is discernable, however dim and indistinct, we struggle on against any obstacle. It is only when she fails us that we are tempted to sever by our own hand the chord of life. With the prospect of being yet successful came the hope that you had not received my letter or if you had that you answered and I did not receive your answer. . . .

Yours
T.W. Kelly

Sunday, June 30.

Dear Rose—

I received your letter yesterday. My own good constant girl. how thankful I am I did not despair of hearing from you, that my trust in you was not weak enough to yield before one or two unanswered letters. . . .

. . . I have no news to tell you yet about my own affairs but they are coming to a crisis and I will have good or bad news to write you very soon. I hope you are well acquainted with my sister and are good
friends by this time, if not you must become so. next to you I love her beyond all the world.

This glorious Yankee nation has become so enthusiastic, I couldn’t find any writing paper without some patriotic emblem but I don’t think it inappropriate even in this letter to my wife. we are both firm believers in union and I think after this trial of our faith neither can be afraid of the others secession . . .

I was up nearly all of last night. there was a very large fire here—at one time it seemed as if Oil City would be laid in ruins, but we succeeded in putting it out. I worked hard and I feel tired out. it is now one o’clock Monday morning and my eyes will not stay open . . .

Yours,
T.W.K.

My Dear Rose

You will think that my—what will I call it?—threat, to write every week was forgotten very soon, but I went to Oil City thirty miles below here on Monday and did not get back till last night. I took yours of the 8th from the Post office this morning. I am situated like you as regards something interesting to write about, it is miserably dull here. Mr. Gallagher went to Buffalo five weeks ago for an Engine. he was to be gone only a week but he didn’t get back yet. it has given me the worst kind of blues doing nothing but waiting about expecting him from day to day— I am sorry I didn’t write to you on the Sunday before I went down the river. I would have an answer so much sooner. . . .

I am determined if possible to go in September, and then three or four weeks with you in those—“mild sweet days. it is almost too much for my sanity to think of it now. . . .

Always yours
T.W.K.

My dear Rose

Who took the trouble to tell you I was ill. I am very sorry you have been alarmed so unnecessarily. . . .

Mr. G. returned yesterday. within ten days we will have our engine

Tidioute July 21st 1861.

6 For those fortunate enough to own one, a steam engine was used first in drilling a well and then in pumping oil to the surface.
up and try our well. most of the wells here have failed so I haven’t much confidence ours mine. if it don’t pay “good bye Tidioute.

Then the unpleasant question “what next” will present itself. there is such a general prostration of business it will be difficult to answer it. . . .

This war must come to an end before we can hope for better times. the spirit the people of the north exhibit is truly astonishing. this sparsely settled county has contributed already from six to seven hundred men.

About a hundred left here yesterday, an awkward squad they were but good material, mountaineers and lumbermen, fellows that know nothing of fatigue.

It was very affecting to see them take leave of their friends, great rough weatherbeaten fellows wept like children, I thought my own eyes were not undimmed as they moved off. . . . I feel very guilty dear Rose when I think of all the unhappiness I have caused you. how quiet and peaceful your life was till I disturbed its even tenor with my restless love, but it will all be well yet. the darkest hour comes before the dawning. God love you, darling. good bye—

Yours always
T.W.Kelly

Dear Rose

Do write to me oftener. you don’t know what an unreasonably impatient fellow I am. when I don’t hear from you within a few days of the time I expect a letter I become half demented. every day this week I have walked to the Post office at least a mile through the noon day heat 95° in the shade and each day has intensified my disappointment.

This hot weather and other causes of unrest are enough for my moderate stock of patience without the heart sickness of hope deferred. All the pleasure I have is in hearing from you and when I do not I have a dread of something being the matter which becomes after a time unendurable. this may be foolish and unreasonable. I try to make myself think so, but it’s no use. like a miser I must be assured of the safety of my treasure. . . .

I have nothing new to tell you. I feel a little more encouraged than when I wrote last. if I can take means enough from Tidioute to go at something else I will not care. one reverse should not dishearten as young man as I am.

I must get back to the burden of my letter. Write, write, write. if
you don't write right off, at once, immediately, as soon as you receive this when I go to the Falls I'll, Oh! how I am longing to get to the Falls. it seems the middle of last century since I saw you. it is said, he who governs himself is greater than one who takes a city, if so I deserve immortality. I cannot think of going home but it requires an effort to keep me from starting instanter. how yearningly my heart goes out to you dear Rose through all those weary months, but this exile will not have been in vain. a year ago I thought I could not love you better than then, but it has grown, stronger, purer, better, more worthy of you. Heaven will give me health and faith its choicest blessings for this world and the next when advocated by your prayers. . . .

Good bye little wife
T.W.K.

My Dear Rose

I didn't receive your letter of the 4th till Saturday and would have written in answer on Sunday but thought I would await the result of our last effort here in the hope that Fortune's sun might smile upon us in the end but it has set without favoring us with a ray.

It will take me perhaps four weeks to wind up my business here and then I will be ready to go home, that is I mean to the Falls. I have looked upon the Falls as my home so long it seems strange to consider it in any other light now. . . .

My contemplated visit to the Falls is an illustration of the proverb "there is no unmixed good in this world." I hate pity and sympathy and there will be so many regretting my bad luck that I don't like to meet them. "we find something in the misfortunes of our best friends to please us." . . .

I must write short letters now, or I won't have anything to talk about when I see you. I may come back to the oil region again. I have thought of several ways of making money. Much as I would be inclined, it won't do to idle my time about the Falls. If I have any brains, I must use them now. it is gratifying to know whatever I may go at that I may gain but cannot lose anything. you are so particular about the appearance of your letters that I have a mind to write this over. I was at work at our unfortunate well all the forenoon and came to the house a little while ago smeared with grease and mud tired and disappointed, and am consequently a little nervous. . . .

Only four weeks Dear Rose till I see you again.

Truly yours
T.W.Kelly
My Dear Rose,

I was down the river when your letter came and didn't get it till yesterday. I will take any bet you like two to one that I wasn't at all angry. My "do write to me oftener" was not meant for a command, if you had read it as I thought it emphasizing the word "do" you would have understood it as an entreaty. . . .

What I said of my dislike to sympathy had no reference to you. it was because I was conscious of yours that I could not brook it from others. it is this which in my desperate circumstances—out of all material things but debt—makes me wealthier than Croesus. Who dares to pity or sympathize with me while I possess your love and your sympathy. had I been successful here beyond my hopes and returned to find I had lost in your love all that made success desireable, then indeed would my broken spirit find some balm in the pity of the meanest.— If you could see her with my eyes of whose love grown strong in adversity I am prouder than a King. . . .

I think I will see you in two or three weeks from now. I have nothing to do but dispose of an engine, which I must do to enable me to get away. . . .

I think I will go at dealing in oil, buying crude oil at the wells, having it refined, and selling it. if I do, I will be in Buffalo a good deal, and will of course be as often at the Falls.

Good-bye darling for a little while.

T.W.Kelly

Sept 18th, 61—

Dear Rose—

I presume you thought I wouldn't be here long enough to receive another letter from you—but I am afraid it will be October before I can get away—

Dear Rose you have been so very, very kind so good a correspondent that I am almost ashamed to ask you to write again, but do please send me just one more letter short as you please, and I will write while I remain here as often as you wish without asking you for an answer—

Won't you be sure to write to me—unmindful of your advice I have been haunting the Post Office for a week.

I will be satisfied if your letter is but to scold—I don't like the last
word—can’t think of something better—ah! yes—that will do chide—if your letter is but to chide me for this paltry affair.

But my desire to hear from is uppermost in my mind I can think of nothing else—

Yours in truth

T.W.K.

19th

I did not mail this yesterday hoping I might hear from you—and I will wait till after the mail comes in tomorrow. I may as well be candid and tell you that I have not been able to shake off the old dread when I do not hear from you that you have taken offense at my last letter or have heard something which has offended you. that Miss Goodwin had been at the Falls since I wrote has augmented my anxiety. the innocent it is said have no cause for fear, but although I am satisfied if you were acquainted with each thought and word and act of my life since I saw you last that there would be nothing in my relation to you you could blame, or to others you could not forgive, experience has made me a coward. what has been may be—will you not write to assure me, to set at rest this fear— Oh Rose I cannot go home to read reproach in eyes, “that seem to love whatever they look upon”— this crowning calamity cannot be reserved for me.

TWK

Dear Rose

I addressed a letter to you at Detroit about two weeks ago and expected, allowing for all possible delays, to have an answer to day—to days mail has brought me no letter and my impatience will permit me to wait no longer. I want to write to you a very long letter as soon as I ascertain where you are in which I will explain why I did not go home or answer your last letter.

Yours

T.W.K.

Dear Rose

I have just received your ultimatum of the 18th inst., and hasten to make the explanation you—pardon me I had almost said request—permit.
I waited in Tidioute while a hope remained of doing anything there. I wanted to sell an engine, of which I spoke to you before, to procure money to go home with, but Tidioute was full of unemployed engines and I could find no purchaser at any price.

About the middle of October I left Tidioute without a solitary cent in my pocket and in debt, not a condition of things to encourage pleasant reflections, yet it was with a heart still buoyant with hope that I stepped on board the raft that bright October morning to work my passage to Oil City, for two weeks I trudged from well to well between here and Titusville—fifteen miles above on the creek—through roads impassable to horses knee deep in mud and oil, but I found no one disposed to buy my precious engine. Mr. Gallagher went home early in September to obtain money. I did not hear from him for nearly three months, in the meantime I had to work at anything and everything to make a living.

Towards the last of November Mr. G. returned. he had he told me made arrangements to procure money, a company had been formed, machinery ordered, and we were going to have a refinery right away. at length it seemed the fickle Goddess was going to smile upon my efforts. we selected a location and I went to work to clear away the ground for the buildings. Mr. G. returned to Buffalo to bring back the machinery. a few days of suspense and he wrote me that from some misunderstanding he could not get the money, so the refinery speculation must fall through. another disappointment but I was getting used to them, no sale for my engine, no refinery. what was now to be done? money I must have. men were making a hundred dollars a week boat- ing oil on the creek. if I had a boat I could do something. I wrote to Tom Murphy and McLeod each of whom owe me two hundred dollars but received no reply. but a boat I was determined to have so I went to work to earn the money to build one. a very good boat for this purpose could be made for seventy five dollars, wherever an opportu- nity offered to earn a dollar I pulled off my coat and went at it. rolling oil barrels till the blood oozed through the ends of my fingers, waist deep in water loading boats while ice was forming on the water about me, pulling planks out of the river &c &c.

Whenever I got two or three dollars ahead I employed a man and went to work at my boat. bright moonlight nights I worked away alone, till tired and sleepy I'd pound my fingers with the hammer instead of the nails.—Last Thursday I was offered a load of oil to Pittsburg on shares. if the weather continued warm a week longer and I was successful in reaching there I would make two or three hundred
dollars. On Friday evening last my boat was finished. That night the weather turned cold and I couldn't use it.

I am now very beautifully situated. I am so ragged and greasy that I don't think you would know me if you met me in Buffalo tomorrow, or if you did you would be ashamed to acknowledge such an acquaintance. I have no money or no way of earning it but by the hardest kind of work. I could earn enough in a week to take me home, but cannot sneak back like a whipped hound. I cannot present myself at the Falls in a condition in which you would be ashamed of me and I would be ashamed of myself. There is a sort of attraction for me in this struggle with the world. I am determined to succeed and thank alone my own exertion. if Fortune withholds her favors I will wring them from her reluctant hand.

Well I have tried to explain why I did not go home, if you have had patience to read it. I did not answer your letter sooner because I did not receive it. I left Tidioute before it reached there. It was five or six weeks before I had an opportunity to send to the Tidioute office on account of the condition of the roads. I wrote a long letter to Detroit.
supposing you had gone there and waited a long time for an answer, and then sent a letter to Detroit and one to the Falls to ascertain where you were.

What a severe little note cold as charity, and addressed to an unfortunate fellow too poor to pay the postage, whose name you have forgotten. Yet the only pleasure I have experienced in a long time was in its receipt. Enough that it came from you to me only four short days since it left your hand. I am not surprised that you were offended at my seeming inattention. What! forget you now, be careless of your love. What else have I dear Rose to sustain me through disappointment and humiliation and poverty.

I have no right to murmur if you refuse to waste your young life waiting on my perhaps unavailing efforts, but yet a little while have patience with me. Your love makes me strong for effort. Give me a little longer its sustaining influence. I know I am not generous in entreating you to keep a promise made under better auspices, but generosity has bounds. Of all else in the world I could be spendthrift but of your love I am a miser. If you do not see fit to write to me I will find no fault, or trouble you again till I am reasonably successful, then I will seek you with a love that knows no shadow of changing, in the hope that the old love might reawaken in your heart.

God love you dear Rose

Good-bye
T.W.Kelly

Sunday Fby 2 62.

Dear Rose,

The recpt of this letter annoys you perhaps. you thought I would trouble you no more. you said I might explain why I did not write or return to the Falls. the reasons I gave should have been sufficient.

I was at Pittsburg and returned on Friday after an absence of nearly two weeks hoping to find a letter from you. I have tried a dozen times since then to write to you but why should I? What had I to say? If I were reasonable there was sufficient to convince me that you wished to be rid of me. but I am not reasonable and why should you. not because I was unfortunate, you would love me better in misfortune. you must tell me why. I promise on my honor not to trouble you again. if it must be so, in the name of all we have been to each other, I ask of you one word of farewell before we part forever. a thousand
times I thank you for all the happiness I have ever known. we part as friends, do we not? I may kiss your hand before I go. go where? to seek forgetfulness.

T.W.K.

Epilogue

Tim sought his forgetfulness by joining the Union Army and in August of 1862 he was busy recruiting a company to serve in Corcoran’s Irish Brigade. Upon encouragement from Rose’s mother, Tim and Rose began corresponding again while Tim was serving in Virginia. Their love was rekindled and while on a short leave from the Army in April 1864, Captain Timothy Kelly and Rose Shannon were married. After four days of bliss Tim returned to some of the bloodiest fighting of the Civil War. In August 1864, he was captured south of Richmond and spent the next six months in Libby, Salisbury, and Danville prisons. After the war he returned to Buffalo, New York, and to Rose. Tim worked as a tavern keeper and as an inspector of snuff but never made the fortune he sought in the oil fields. The time spent in Confederate prisons permanently damaged his health and he died in 1880, leaving behind Rose, their two sons, Frank and Louis, and a government pension of $20 a month. Rose worked as a milliner after Tim’s death and lived on for almost half a century treasuring his memory and his letters.
ETIQUETTE FOR THE CALLER

The usual hours for paying morning calls are between eleven and two, or twelve and three, and all calls of ceremony should be made between these hours.

Never, in paying a ceremonial call, stay more than twenty minutes, or less than ten. If your hostess has several other visitors at the same time that you are in her parlor, make your visit short, that she may have more attention to bestow upon others.

When the servant answers your ring, hand in your card. If your friend is out or engaged, leave the card, and if she is in, send it up. Never call without cards. You may offend your friend, as she may never hear of your call, if she is out at the time, and you trust to the memory of the servant.

If your friend is at home, after sending your card up to her by the servant, go into the parlor to wait for her. Sit down quietly, and do not leave your seat until you rise to meet her as she enters the room. To walk about the parlor, examining the ornaments and pictures, is illbred. It is still more unlady-like to sit down and turn over to read the cards in her card basket. If she keeps you waiting for a long time, you may take a book from the centre-table to pass away the interval.

Editor's note — The above excerpt is from a recent library accession Etiquette for Ladies by Florence Hartley published in 1873. How do your manners measure up?