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BROKEN HOPES MENDED

"That is all that you wished to say to me, aunt?"

"That is all that I wished to say to you," the elder lady repeated with slight sarcasm, and Edwina felt herself therewith dismissed.

She went out of the room and down the long staircase, feeling strangely weak and helpless.

Some one came dancing in off the piazza—for this was their last summer home at Bromfield. Edwina knew it must be Kitty, but Edwina could hardly see. Her eyes were still blinded by the weakness that had settled upon her while her aunt was speaking.

She did not call to her cousin, as she might have done an hour before; she did not look at her. She did not wish to see anyone just now—Kitty least of all. But Kitty, halting, saluted her with a blithe "Neddie, my love, stop a bit; I want to tell you something."

There was little similarity in their appearance. They were both fair; but Edwina was out-and-out a Clay—tall, slender, pale, and reserved, while Miss Carmichael had few, if any, of the characteristics of her mother's family.

Plump and sandy was Kitty, a trifle freckled, with bewitching dimples, a saucy mouth and divine Irish-gray eyes.

By nature she was as rollicking and impetuous as her late father, Colonel Carmichael, whom her grandfather Clay had never forgiven for running away with his youngest daughter.

Kitty's paternal inheritance of good looks and good nature had been greatly to her advantage in a worldly sense. She had this, and this only, to blame for the manner in which her grandfather had treated her in his will.

The old gentleman had died something over a year previous, leaving the bulk of his large fortune to Edwina, "only child of his late son Edwin," while to Kitty he had left only a miserable little stipend, barely enough to support her. Grandfather Clay had never been reconciled to Charlotte, his youngest daughter.

Kitty had borne her ill-luck with philosophical good-humor, and continued to reside, as previously, with her maiden aunt and cousin—for both girls were orphaned these many years.

Edwina was generous and had thought the will unjust.

"Never mind, Kitty," she had said, "you shall have a dowry when you marry; meanwhile I want to arrange for you a little extra pin-money."

"Dowry is all right," said Kitty, "but never mind the pin-money." And it was with difficulty that Miss Clay could prevail on the proud little creature to accept what was by rights her own.

But Miss Carmichael's thoughts were far enough from the subject of unjust wills as she hailed her cousin there on the staircase.

Edwina descended the remaining steps, looking paler than usual.

"What is it?" she asked slowly.

But Kitty's sharp eyes noted something amiss.

"Neddie," she cried, "what is up?"

"Nothing," said Edwina faintly. "I—I don't feel quite well. Aunt Josephine has been talking to me; I think I will lie down a while."

"H'm! If aunt has been talking to you I suppose you'd need to lie down and rest," said Miss Carmichael dryly. "I'll see you again by-and-bye, Ned." And she tarried like a young squirrel and whisked herself out again into the open air.

Edwina entered the drawing-room and threw herself upon a sofa. It was dark and quiet, and no one would interrupt her there. She would have a chance to think over what her aunt had been saying.

Suppose it were authentic, the will that her aunt had discovered that very morning in its strange hiding-place, the old clock? And her aunt seemed to think it authentic.

"I thought it best to tell you at once, Edwina," she had said. "I will not show you the will; I have reasons. But it is certainly your grandfather's handwriting, witnessed by the Bateses, father and son, who called here a week before father died, and sailed a day or two later for foreign parts. They have been abroad ever since, you remember. There is another thing: Your grandfather, just before he died, spoke Kitty's name and then the 'clock!' We thought he meant only the clock should be hers. I cannot tell why I should have been impelled to open that clock this morning.

"Edwina, if this should be—if this calamity should fall upon you, and I cannot help regarding it as a calamity, I do not consider myself wanting in affection for my sister's daughter, as well as my brother's, but Kitty is so different, so little a Clay—if this calamity should fall you shall share all that I possess of course.

"But meanwhile your wedding is set for October; this is the last of August. I do not for a moment suppose that your loss of fortune would affect your betrothed himself—but his family. They are very proud, very ambitious; they may be even mercenary. Edwina, I have replaced the paper in the clock, and spoken to no one of finding it. Suppose we leave it so till after your wedding? You need not decide at once; think about it a while. This, however, is my advice."

Edwina went carefully over her aunt's communication. Suppose it were true? Suppose her Grandfather Clay, in some strange sudden remorse, had done this thing?

She remembered the last week of his life. He had been speechless nearly all that week, and had taken little notice of anything or anyone. It was quite possible that he had turned about and written the few words necessary to revoke all former wills and leave everything to Kitty Carmichael.

Yet why should he turn from one injustice to another? She asked herself bitterly why he could not have divided his fortune fairly, providing for both granddaughters alike.

Edwina was far from avaricious. Had she been quite her own mistress—had there not been Aunt Josephine to disapprove, as well as other complications—she would long since, of her own free will, have made over half her inheritance to her cousin. But now to have everything swept away! It was a crushing, humiliating prospect.

With Frederick Montgomery, her affianced husband, it would probably make no difference; but with his family? Her aunt's suggestion was very forcible, appalling! With all her faith in her lover, Edwina had not lived twenty years and over and escaped knowledge that a man's family may clutch and control him with an iron grip the easy ease with which they could control a daughter or sister.

Edwina was strongly conscious that her father would never have been guilty of a run-away match, as had been her Aunt Charlotte, the mother of Kitty. In all such love matters women are infinitely stronger, tenderer, and more faithful than are men, and Edwina, knowing this, could not measure her lover by her own heart.

Edwina lay there for an hour or more. Consider the matter as she might, there seemed no relief, no solution.

She sat up at length, with her head throbbing and her face on fire. The afternoon was slipping away. She heard the clock strike five. She arose and went out upon the piazza. Kitty was reading in a hammock on the lawn. She descended and came toward the house.

"Have you been asleep, Ned?" she asked. "Your face is flushed. I'll run and get you a fan."

"No," said Edwina a little sharply then. "No, don't, dear; I really don't feel warm. What book were you reading?"

"The most exciting affair I could find, of course. Neddie, I wish you'd begin to rush your wedding preparations a little. I shall perish of dulness here."

Edwina moved uneasily. Suppose there should be no wedding because of her altered fortunes?

But Kitty ran on blithely enough:

"You've a notion to marry—it doesn't make very much difference whom, you know. I have begun to think I ought to marry somebody—anybody that's nice and good-natured and will take me about the world. You'll be gone in a month or so, and I shall be left to Aunt Josephine's mercy." Kitty made a little grimace; she was sitting on the steps, while Edwina occupied a rustic-chair above. "I don't see," she ended up, "how I shall exist, Ned, when you are married off."

Edwina answered with vague bitterness:

"Perhaps something will happen to alter things."

Kitty puckered up her brows.

"Alter things? I'd like to have a hand at that. But there's no danger, I've a precious mind to marry Phil Fortescue. He's not as fine a lover as your Frederick, but——"

Edwina could endure no more.

"I think I will go in; it is time to dress for dinner," she said wearily.

She did not go at once to her own room. She passed her aunt's door and went towards the chamber in which her grandfather had died, and where the clock stood in which the paper had been found that morning.

She wondered how her aunt had come to enter that chamber. It was usually kept locked; all things remained as at her grandfather's death.

She turned the knob softly, impelled by uncanny fascination. The door was locked, as usual.

Edwina now retraced her steps and sought her own room, where she threw herself upon the bed and covered her face.

Miss Josephine Clay and Miss Kitty Carmichael dined tête-a-tête that evening, and Edwina was absent. She was not well, was the word she sent down; they might send her a cup of tea, please.

It was a considerable battle that the girl was fighting out alone. Everything seemed against her. She plainly read her aunt's wish that nothing be said until after her marriage.

She admitted her aunt's apprehension as to Frederick Montgomery's family to be well grounded. She conceded that Kitty would be practically as well off in receiving her great fortune a month or two later as in receiving it now. But, on the other hand, truth, honor! Did not these demand the instant wresting of that paper from its hiding-place in the silent chamber yonder? Did not right demand that not an hour passed without Kitty Carmichael knowing her true position?

Edwina was fighting out a bitter battle. Thank Heaven, she had courage to lock in the face of all possibilities—deprivation, mortification, even the breaking off of the marriage.

The room was dark now; she had not lighted the gas. The house was still, save that Kitty was playing dance music in the drawing-room—playing softly, not to disturb her cousin.

Edwina stood upon her feet once more. She opened the door and staggered out into the hall. She knew that her aunt had come upstairs. She went slowly towards the latter's room and rapped sharply.

Edwina's entrance was unsteady.

"I have come to speak to you about that—that other will," she said at once. "I—I have made up my mind that Kitty should know of it directly. There is no reason for—for delay."

Miss Josephine replied with cold disapprobation:

"I think we found several reasons when speaking of it this afternoon."

There was a moment's silence. Edwina could still hear Kitty playing softly in the drawing-room below. Then she spoke again, a little hoarsely:

"However that may be, I have decided. I have taken time to consider well; I have looked everything in the face, and I—I could not sleep to-night with this upon my mind. Will you give me the key to grandfather's room, that I may go for the—paper?"

The elder lady regarded her incredulously.

"You can hardly be in earnest, Edwina?"

"I am thoroughly in earnest," said Edwina in a clearer voice. "Will you please let me have the key?"

Miss Josephine Clay had risen to her feet; a certain wild look was on her face—a look that only came there in extreme anger—a look that at any time previous would have caused her niece to tremble.

But Edwina returned her gaze without flinching.

The elder lady's hand slipped slowly into her pocket and slowly out again. One slim arm reached out disdainfully. The key dropped upon the carpet between the two women. Edwina stooped and picked it up.

"Thank you," she said.

Miss Josephine answered with a coldness more bitter than any threat:

"Go your own way. But by-and-by, expect no sympathy from me."

Edwina flew from the room. It seemed to her she must make haste, lest later she should lose the strength now buoying her up.

With shaking hands she unlocked the door of that silent chamber. The light from the hall made objects sufficiently distinct.

A moment later her trembling fingers had closed upon the paper. She closed the clock, came out of the room, and relocking the door, came to the balusters.

"Kitty, Kitty!" she cried out desperately, "come up here—quickly."

There was a strange ring in her voice—not excitement, but exultation. Victory! victory! The battle nearly ended!

Kitty came rushing up the staircase with amazed eyes.

"Come into aunt's room," said Edwina, less steadily. Now that all was over, perhaps would come reaction.

"Kitty," said Edwina, "aunt has found this in the clock that grandfather left you. You are the one most interested—and—I congratulate you!"

Kitty received the document calmly.

"Pull up, Ned, pull up! You are awfully excited." And then she read it aloud.

"Great goodness!" she exclaimed, when she began to comprehend. "You don't suppose that is good for anything." She had turned to Miss Josephine, but the latter sat silent and impassive.

"Yes," said Edwina; "it is certainly grandfather's latest will. You see the date—and the witnesses. It—it will change everything, of course; you are the heiress. Kitty, you have been kept out of your rights too long. It—it may be—oh, well, whatever happens will be for the best, I trust!"

"Bah!" said Kitty; "and what do you suppose the Montgomerys will say?"

Edwina drew a little sobbing breath and made no answer.

But Miss Carmichael turned sharply at another sound.

Miss Josephine Clay had stirred and emitted something like a sniff of contemptuous pleasure.

"Sit down, Edwina," said her cousin, pushing her into a chair.

She went over to the mantel then, did Miss Carmichael, and stood where the light of an unglobed bracket made the writing on the paper more legible. She spoke again presently.

"There is just one thing about it. Grandfather—with due respect to his memory—was altogether too cranky at will-making. You needn't frown at me, Aunt Josephine. This has always been my opinion. While everything was Ned's I kept it to myself; now that everything is mine, I don't hesitate to speak it out aloud. I say he was cranky. He might have divided things, like a sensible man. As for this bit of writing, I'm too fond of Neddie to spoil her affairs; so, here goes!"

"Kitty!"

Edwina sprang to her feet with a startled cry, for the girl had thrust the paper into the blaze of the gas.

Miss Josephine sat as one stricken dumb.

"Oh, Kitty!"

That was all her cousin could say. The charred fragments fell and were scattered over the mantel; and Miss Carmichael walked nonchalantly away from them.

"What in the world should I do with such responsibilities?" she inquired. "I'd want to divide with you, that's about all."

Tears were flowing down Edwina's cheeks.

"Kitty," she said, "the division will be made to-morrow. I ought to have done so sooner; indeed, I would, but for——"

She broke off. Kitty had glanced significantly at their aunt; she evidently understood.

Edwina kept her word, and all went well. The marriage was not interrupted. Moreover, Kitty herself was shortly after betrothed to Phil Fortescue.

THE OLD FLAME.

"Miss Mandeville? Of course I know Miss Mandeville," said Florian Fontenel. "There were two sisters of them, weren't there? One a radiant blonde with such a profusion of magnificently burnished hair, that they called her 'The Princess with the Golden Locks'—the other, a little brunette, with black braids coiled at the back of her head, and solemn eyes that looked you through and through. Oh yes, I remember them very well. They were great belles in New York—was it the winter before last, or the winter before that? And everybody wondered they didn't return last season. So they live here, do they? Well, upon my word, this is quite an agreeable discovery. I must make it my business to go and call directly, for, do you know, Ariadne, I was just the least little bit hit by the brunette with the great, grave, questioning eyes."

Mrs. Major Fontenel shook a cloud of fragrance from the satin folds of her fan, and moved her head a little disdainfully.

Flattering as these brotherly confidences might be, their spirit was not exactly in unison with the tender relations which she would have preferred.

She had been a widow for ten years now, and in her own opinion was no less beautiful than when she had first stood at the altar.

And, after all, what did it matter that she was five or six years older than her cousin Florian? He suited her. And she had invited him to Fontenel Plains to fall in love with her, not to maunder about his old fancies.

"Yes," said she coldly. "I heard something of their once being in society. But it didn't last long. Old Mandeville, their grandfather, had got involved in speculations, and when he shot himself it was no more than people expected."

"And how do they support themselves?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose they go out governessing, or take in sewing or something. Somehow people always do get provided for in this world."

"Then you don't visit them?"

Mrs. Fontenel lifted her brows.

"Quite impossible!" she said. "They were selling bouquets out of the greenhouses until the place was foreclosed. Fancy selling bouquets out of one's own greenhouses for a living! And Cassie has gone somewhere to learn stenography, and Kate goes around in calico dresses, exactly like a servant girl!"

Florian smiled to himself.

"She is better posted as to these two girls than she is willing to admit," thought he.

And the next morning he walked over the old stone bridge, and out across the fields to the old stone house which Leonidas Mandeville had died in.

The upper blinds were all as carefully closed and bolted as if the old man's corpse still lay in the echoing rooms; but the basement windows were thrown open to admit the fresh October air, and a round dark face, brilliant as that of a Spanish senorita, appeared at the door to answer his knock.

"Is it the man for the quince jelly?" said she. "It is not ready yet. I told you to come this evening."

"I am very fond of quince jelly," said Florian Fontenel gravely, "but I fear I am not the excellent individual whom you are expecting. Don't you remember me, Miss Kate?"

"It is Mr. Fontenel," said Kate Mandeville, the crimson color mounting to her cheek.

"Exactly," said Florian. "May Mr. Fontenel come in?"

Miss Mandeville hesitated a second, then opened the door with a composed smile.

"Yes, walk in," said she, "and see how industrious I am. I am a working woman now. I do up preserves, pickles, canned fruit and jellies. It isn't such unpleasant work, except when the weather is warm; and I am very liberally paid for it. Cassie is a worker, too. She is a member of a stenographic class, and is to get twenty dollars a week when she graduates."

Kate had spoken all these sentences with a careless grace, which would lead an indifferent auditor to infer that it was all a matter of course. But Florian Fontenel knew her well enough to hold the true key to her nature. He understood how painful it was for her thus tacitly to acknowledge the blight which had passed over her fortunes since last they met.

"I see," he said quietly, "things are changed, Miss Mandeville, since I gave you that spray of sweet verbena in Mrs. Lyttell's conservatory that winter night. You were a belle then—the star of the evening. People spoke of you as the beautiful Miss Mandeville."

"Did they?"

"And I told myself," Florian added, "that it was useless to hope to win the love of one so courted and flattered. That I had no sort of chance. That it was best for me to withdraw from the lists before I had got my poor wings, moth-fashion, hopelessly scarred and seared."

"That was so like a man," said Kate with rising color. "You constituted yourself judge, jury, and executioner all in one. Will you be good enough to step a little aside?" I have to pack these glasses carefully into a box, and——"

"Pardon me," said Fontenel, without stirring the tenth part of an inch. "Just a minute more. Well, I left and went abroad. The next winter, when I returned, other stars were shining upon the fashionable horizon. My planet was gone. I am a proud man by nature, and I said to myself that if Miss Mandeville had cared for me she would have signified to me, by some sign, however slight, that she was still in existence. She did not."

"You can see why," said Kate, with heightened color. "I have received too many rebuffs from the dear particular friends of old days to encourage me to risk any new dangers. But," with drooping eyelashes, "I have got the sprig of sweet verbena hidden away in my portfolio yet. I don't often get time to look at it, but it is always there to think of. Now may I go on with the jelly?"

"Not quite yet," said Fontenel with a gravity that was truly laudable. "Miss Mandeville, if I had followed out the first instincts of my heart the night I gave you the sweet verbena—if I had asked you to be my wife—what would you have said?"

"I should have said yes," Kate answered.

Fontenel bit his lip.

"And I was mad enough to throw away all my chances of happiness," he said. "But I will not be so rash a second time. Will you trust me now, Miss Mandeville? Will you marry me? I loved you dearly then; but, as Heaven is my witness, I love you better and more tenderly now. In all my life I have never really cared for but one woman, and she is before me now. Will you take me, Kate, with all my faults and eccentricities, and try to make me more worthy of yourself?"

And Kate put her little hand in his and answered with innocent frankness:

"Yes."

Mrs. Major Fontenel was one of those feminine diplomats who always adapt themselves graciously to the exigencies of the situation, and she called on Miss Mandeville the next day, and congratulated her, in the prettiest way in the world, upon her engagement.

"But really," she added, with an artless laugh, "I had grown to believe that Florian was a fore-ordained old bachelor. You don't know, Miss Mandeville, what a victory you have achieved!"

And she enacted her part so perfectly that Florian Fontenel, in spite of his own senses, was almost convinced that she had never cared for him at all.

But to her French maid, Jeanne, she said angrily, when at last she returned home and flung her elegant wrappings recklessly on the sofa:

"There bursts the brightest bubble of my future! I could have held my own against any new fancy, I solemnly believe, but these old flames are too much for anyone to contend against."

And Jeanne clasped her hands and answered tragically.

"Ah, madame, it is very much heart breaking!"

CALIFORNIA RABBIT DRIVES.

How the Long eared Pests are Exterminated on the San Joaquin Plains.

Rabbits have multiplied so rapidly throughout California that they have become one of the most serious pests of the country. It is estimated that three rabbits will eat as much as a sheep, and that what can be killed in a day's rabbit drive will consume as much alfalfa as a hundred beef cattle. A good many schemes have been devised for getting rid of the pests, but the only efficacious one is the rabbit drive. This is considered very good field sport, also, and a drive is always participated in as much by those who are after fun as by those who want the rabbits killed.

The first thing in getting up a rabbit drive is to make a rabbit-proof corral of close, high palings enclosing a space about thirty by ten, or twenty yards. Leading into this at right angles are two lines of closely set palings a quarter of a mile in length. Several hundred men on horseback and on foot then spread out a section or two of land and work slowly toward the corral with shouts and beating of the ground.

At first but few rabbits will be seen, but as the drivers close in toward the palings the little frightened beasts are as thick as sheep in a corral. They make frantic efforts to escape, and in trying to break through the line of beaters many are killed by the clubs of the walkers. The drive is close in slowly, and the rabbits are gradually driven into the space partially enclosed by the palings, and from there it is easy to force them into the corral. They troop in like sheep, crowding over one another, and filling the corral.

The drivers on foot follow, the corral is closed, and the slaughter begins. They are killed with the clubs by striking them on the head. The air is filled with their shrill squealing, which can be heard a mile away. They leap about in desperation, jump high, and dash themselves against the fence, huddle in the corners, and try to hide behind one another, or behind the heaps of those already killed. The clubs whistle through the air, not infrequently striking the shins of the killers instead of the heads of the rabbits, for it requires a good aim, a steady arm, and no small amount of skill to guide every stroke to its destination on the skull of a rabbit that is leaping about like mad.

When the slaughter is ended the rabbits are strewn over the ground as thick as dead leaves, and in places their carcasses will be in piles two feet high. Between 1,200 and 1,500 rabbits are usually killed in each drive, and it is no uncommon thing for one man to score a hundred dead rabbits in one round up. In parts most infested the drives are held once a week.

LOSING THEIR PECULIARITIES.

A Southern Paper Discovers Marked Improvements in the Physiognomy of Colored People.

The negro is changing in appearance and losing some of the birthmarks peculiar to the African race. The new generation is showing the effects of a higher culture. Especially is this noticeable in the towns where contact with the whites shows its effect.

The flat-nosed, kinky-headed negro is passing away and becoming an unknown race. All the colored children, no matter how dusky in hue, show the change. Among the females long hair of that peculiar woolly appearance hangs in long braids or curls down their backs. Aquiline noses and smaller mouths with thinner lips are the rule.

For years, and, in fact, ever since their freedom, the negresses have endeavored to do away with the short and kinky hair bestowed upon them by their ancestors. Much of their spare change is invested in various hair tonic and invigorators, and the long attention and care bestowed upon it is shown in their descendants.

The South Georgia negro is an evidence of evolution, the survival of the fittest.—Atlanta Constitution.

A Coolness at the Table.

A countryman took a seat at a hotel table opposite to a gentleman who was indulging in a bottle of wine.

Supposing the wine to be common property, the unsophisticated countryman helped himself to it with the other gentleman's glass.

"That's cool!" exclaimed the owner of the wine, indignantly.

"Yes," said the other, "I should think there was ice in it."

GRANDPA'S STORY.

"So it seems Fred Hayes has finally jilted Fanny Howe," said Grandpa West, one rainy morning, as he stood shaking off the drops from his great coat on our kitchen stove.

"Yes," replied I, as I filled a pan with apples and prepared to cut them, "and more shame to him, too. Brought her clear up to an engagement, and then left town with another girl, and without one word to Fan."

"Shame!" repeated good Grandpa West, with an indignant flash from eyes blue and clear as at twenty-one; "it's a disgrace to any Christian church to let one of its members go on so. Time was when he wouldn't have gone scot free as he has now."

"But what could have been done?" I inquired.

"Done? He'd have the full broadside of church discipline on his shoulders fifty years ago. He ought to be dealt with as Harmon Page was, concluded grandpa, meditatively.

"How was that?" inquired I, interested at once.

"I wonder if you ever heard that story!" said he, with a curious glance understood better afterwards. "See here, it's a rainy day, and mother won't be expecting me home. Hand over a knife and I'll help you with your apples and tell that yarn at the same time."

Well pleased with the plan, I took another pan, and our fingers flew as grandpa went on with the true and authentic history of Harmon Page.

"You see," he began, "all this happened fifty years ago, and Amityville wasn't then the slow-going, dull little place it is now. It was comparatively new, and was as lively and enterprising as the new places of the West are to-day. There were a good many old aristocratic families though, and I tell ye they held their heads high. The very meetin' house slips had to be ganged accordin' to the rank and buyer, and I tell you old Deacon Avery would never have got the scowl out of his forrard if Squire Page had happened to haven sent in front of his.

"Deacon Avery had a daughter—a quiet, gentle girl, with a slight, graceful figure and a face—well, you don't see such faces nowadays; a clear, fine complexion, with a delicate pink trembling up into her lips when she was spoken to. Her eyes were great limpid wells, changing with every thought, and her hair was a soft chestnut brown, waving about her face in its own way ward style.

"She was a lovely girl, became a professor young, and was always to be seen in the end of the deacon's pew every Sunday, rain or shine. She'd never had much company, for there was a kind of dignified reserve about her that kept the fellows at a distance. But when she was long 'bout eighteen or twenty Harmon Page began to go with her.

"He was a handsome, high-spirited chap, lively and full of talk, and as different from Mercy Avery as two persons could well be. But they loved each other; there's no doubt about that. Many's the time I've seen her grand eyes sparkle and pretty cheeks flush at Harmon's witty speeches, till she was really brilliant. And he, with all his proud spirit, always grew strangely gentle with Mercy.

"So, in spite of the rivalry that had always existed between the two families, no one would have disturbed the two, had it not been for Virginia Wake. She was a cousin of Colonel Ford's first wife and came there visitin' from the South.

"Virginia was called a handsome girl, with her brunette face, flashing black eyes, and heavy black curls she was never tired of jingling around her neck. She had a good deal, too, of what you call 'style,' and Amityville folks who didn't know as much of the ways of the world as they do now were completely fascinated with her taking ways. The young fellows in particular hovered around like moths around a candle.

"All except Harmon Page. He had engaged himself to Mercy, and at first gave the new comer the go-by. The Pages and Fords had a family feud of a good many years' standing, which kept them apart for one thing, and Virginia had plenty of company besides Harmon.

"But I suppose Harmon's indifference piqued the girl, and she snubbed the other boys and exerted all her charms on Harmon.

"She came in the fall, and along about Christmas time the neighbors began to notice that Virginia was mighty thick at the Pages.

"The two houses were pretty near together, and I shy good to rhymes to Mother Page's ca some excuse or other twenty times a day. Perhaps 'twan't strange that Harmon began to be flattered by it. He had as good a turnout as any chap in the place, and he got in the habit of taking Virginia considerable.

"You see position's everything in more cases than one, and Virginia was right there handy, while Mercy lived at the top of one of our old-fashioned Connecticut hills, with a dreadful hard road leading to it.

"Whether she knew how much Harmon was taking the other girl wasn't known; some thought not. She didn't get out much, except to meetin' that winter, and she had enough of her father's spunk about her not to let on that she saw Harmon foolin' with Virginia Wake at the noonin's.

"There was splendid sleighing that season—the kind we don't have these days—and some of the young folks wanted to have a general sleigh ride. It was put off from time to time, till 'twas finally set for one Thursday night.

"It was the night of the regular weekly prayer meeting, and after the time of the ride was all settled Harmon, who was the only professor in the party, tried a little to have it changed. But Virginia Wake declared, with a wicked shake of those jingling curls, that she could say her prayers just as well in a sleigh as she could cooped up in that stupid barn of a meeting house.

"Everybody thought afterwards that she fixed the ride for that night to show Mercy very the power she and over Harmon Page.

"Well, the party started from Amityville long about five o'clock. They were all in a big two horse load except Virginia and Harmon.

"She had arranged for them to go ahead in his cutter alone, and I'll admit they were a splendid looking couple—he with his fine eyes and teeth, and she in a rich crimson hood that set off her beauty to perfection.

"Our route—for I was one of the party—lay straight up the hill towards Deacon Avery's. Just as we turned into it who should we meet but the deacon and Mercy.

"They were late, for the meeting was also appointed for early candle lighting; but Mercy, poor girl, probably waited awhile for Harmon, who for a year back had taken her to Thursday meetin' as regular as the day came round.

"She sat up straight and queenly beside her father as they passed, and seemed not to hear the malicious sally Virginia called out to her.

"We, in the back team, were near enough to catch the scornful glance she threw from those deep eyes, gray as steel that night.

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