

COLONEL TODHUNTER OF MISSOURI

young Tom Strickland does is just right, and you'd stand up for him quicker than his own father. And as for Mary, she can twist you around her finger any time. Don't think I place any dependence upon you where they're concerned, sir!"

Colonel Todhunter smiled calmly. "I ain't askin' you to, Mary," he retorted. "In the first place, I approve of Tom's fallin' as deep in love with Mary as he knows how. In the second place, interferin' in these here sentimental affairs is a mighty ticklish business, and I'm here at this picnic to have a good time. I'm a-goin' to have it, too!" Saying which, he beat a hasty retreat.

But he had hardly succeeded in placing a section of the picnic crowd between himself and Mrs. Todhunter when a young girl came running along his trail, breathless, and with mischievous eyes.

"Mrs. Todhunter wants you to come right back to her, Colonel," she announced. "She's short on men to help her, and she's awful busy. Wants you to come right away, sir!"

Colonel Todhunter glanced whimsically at the messenger. "Ain't that just like a man's wife? She didn't want Judge Bolling when she saw him. Oh,