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## THE SLEIGH RIDE.

The afternoon is as bright as a glowing sun shining upon the frost snow of the night previous can make it. The air is mild, and yet the snow has not melted enough to spoil the sleighing, and Tom Prince and Kittie Maynard are enjoying what is known in Follen as the "ten mile drive."

Tom and Kittie had known each other from childhood, and in the days of boy and girlhood, before they had gone away for what the farmers around about called their "edication," they had played at being lovers in the regulation country fashion. Since Tom had graduated from college, however, and Kittie had returned from boarding school, there had been a manifest difference of relations between them.

They had grown shy of each other, and two or three times already had Mistress Kittie declined an invitation from Tom to take this very "ten mile drive." To-day, however, the delightful softness of the weather, the brilliancy with which the sun shone, the sight of the span of trotters, in which Tom took a justifiable pride, and perhaps some secret inclination to try a touch of the old time flirtation, had made Kittie say yes when she had fully intended to say no, and there was no drawing back.

At least, whether he did or did not know it, Tom undeniably did drive well, and he also looked his best in the fur cap and fur-trimmed coat in which upon this special day he was arrayed. Kittie, of course, pretended not to look at him at all, while as a matter of fact she could not have kept her eyes off him if her life had depended upon it.

She was well enough worth looking at herself, with her seal skins and the clear color in her cheeks. Tom thought she had never looked so pretty in her life, and it is not impossible that he was quite right in the matter. As the pair went skimming along to the jingle of the sleigh bells they were a very attractive and charming young couple.

They did not say much at first. Tom was a good deal occupied with his horses, which were fresh, and Kittie, she had enough to do in watching Tom and pretending that she was utterly indifferent whether she was here in the sleigh with him, or droning over the most stupid book in her Aunt Priscilla's shelf of memoirs of dead and gone missionaries. She was, besides, too blissfully content to care whether she said anything or not, and it was not until they had got to Ackley's Hill that they began to talk at all. Ackley's Hill was a steep stretch of nearly a mile. The span capered along for a little at the foot of it, but they knew the ground, and it hardly needed the rein to remind them that they had a deal of uphill pulling to do before they came to the top of the slope.

"It is strange how these old places bring up things," Tom said suddenly, as the sleigh glided more slowly. "Just then, when I looked up, the sight of the old hill, and the feeling of going up Ackley's brought up that time when Tim Lawton and May Manley were thrown out here. Don't you remember?"

"Remember?" answered Kittie. "I shouldn't forget if I should live to be a thousand years old. I was never so frightened in my life."

"It was just such a day as this," Tom went on, "and you know that"—

"Don't," Kittie broke in.

"Don't what?"

"Don't talk of it till we get off this hill."

"Why not?"

"It is silly, of course," she answered, "but it makes me nervous."

"Then I will not say another word about it, not even to remind you that the stone they struck on is the one we passed five minutes ago."

"Wasn't it horrible?" Kittie went on, inconsistently ignoring her own words. "To think of his being killed when he was having such a good time."

"I don't know," Tom replied soberly. "It has always seemed to me that it is much easier to get out of life when one is happy than when one is sad."

"Yes; in one way, of course it is," she answered; "but to leave pleasant things must be harder than to leave things that are not pleasant."

"We don't look at things so much from the standpoint of the person as from our own," was the answer. "Now you take it in Tim's case. Everybody said how hard it was for him to be cut off just when he was happy and when he thought May would marry him; but that is not the way in which to look at it, it seems to me that if he had lived he would have found out that May was playing fast and loose with him, and he would have had to suffer not only from her deceit, but from the beastly meanness of his own brother, who had really taken her away from him. Don't you think that it was far happier for him to go while he was ignorant of this, and while he was still happy in believing that things were all as he wished them?"

"Oh, of course; but it seemed a pity that he could not know."

"You think that he would fail to understand this, and would be unhappy in another life because of the happiness he would have supposed himself to have lost in this?"

"It sounds a little immoral to put it in that way."

"But isn't that about what you mean?"

"Why, yes, I suppose it is. There seems a certain injustice in his not knowing that really his death was the best thing that could happen to him."

"And if the universe was managed in a feminine way," Tom said, smiling, "I suppose Tim would have been forced to have all this explained to him upon his entrance to another world, so that he might suffer as much as possible in the knowledge that even the joy that he believed he had was a sham, and that there was only baseness and sorrow beyond it all. The alternative does not seem to me so much to be desired."

"Of course not, the way you put it."

"And how would you put it?"