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up to the platform for Mrs. Bowers, Matty and the young hopeful of the family, Master Hiram.

Bowers saw Amos coming and flushing as red as his beard he affected to be busily engaged with the knot of the halter. Amos walked right up to him.

This was a tense moment in the affairs of Clark's Corners, but only one of those on the outside of the little drama seemed to sense the impending storm. That one was Newt Briggs. Newt was a brother of Lem Briggs, the hymn leader, and a partner with him in the carpentering trade, but, unlike Lem, he was not of a religious turn of mind. If there was one thing in which the soul of Newt Briggs delighted it was the witnessing of a fight. He was present at every fight in the surrounding country of which any sort of formal notice had been given, and instinct seemed to guide his movements so that he was generally around when any little impromptu affair of the kind was brought about. Newt had been known to go twelve miles for the express purpose of seeing what had been announced as "the settling of an old grudge." Once, it was told of him, he had gone to see an old grudge laid to rest in the approved form and had returned in a highly dissatisfied state of mind. Asked as to the fight, he had answered, disgustedly, "Aw, shucks! They wouldn't come to blows; they just had a few words!" Newt's proudest boast was that he had once gone a thousand miles to see a real championship fight.

Instinct, perhaps, led Newt to be on the platform that Sunday morning, for he seldom attended service. Something more than instinct led him to jump down off the platform when he saw Amos Witherbee marching on, on towards Nels Bowers. Newt, with a big quid of tobacco distending one cheek, and his eyes alight with the gleam peculiar to the rabid pugilistic fan was right behind Amos. He sniffed a battle and his tawny, straggly moustache moved up and down as he worked the quid of tobacco in his mouth, while his beaked nose seemed strained and tense with expectation and excitement.

However, it must be said, that Newt did not expect much of a fight. He didn't think that Amos would stand much of a chance before the bulky Bowers. However, any kind of a fight was better than none.

Amos walked right up to Nels, as has been said before. Nels lowered his head, more intent than ever upon the refractory knot. Amos jabbed out an impulsive and by no means gentle hand, and grasping Nels by his long, red beard jerked his head around sharply. Nels straightened up as quickly as if someone had set fire to his coat-tails. He had a hot temper, and that jerking of his whiskers was of a nature to have stirred to wrath a much milder man.

"H—!" he said, "no man can do that to me, even if he is an old one!" Amos slipped out of his black Sunday coat with surprising swiftness and threw himself into a posture half defensive, half offensive. Nels threw his coat off also. Next minute they were at it.

Newt Briggs was right when he opined that the fight would not last long. There was just a few minutes of scurry, a few revolving arms, a few grunts, and then it was all over. But Newt was wrong when he thought that Amos would be the under dog.

The fight was over before Pastor Cragg, alarmed by the shouts of the men and the cries of the women, had arrived back on the scene. He had just crossed the churchyard on his way to the parsonage and he had come back on the run. The sight that met his eyes was the bruised and recumbent form of Bowers, on the ground and propped up against his own carriage wheel with the militant and triumphant form of Amos — strange transfiguration — pacing up and down before him. The pastor was speechless.

"Bowers!" yelled Amos, "I never yet hit a man when he was down, but if you don't say that you was spreadin' a lie about my little gal I'll punch the head plumb off'n you! Did you lie, Bowers? Come, quick now, or I'll land one on the p'int of your nose; that ain't smashed yet!"

Bowers nodded his battered head.

"Motions ain't enough!" shouted Amos. "Say that you lied about my little gal — an' say it quick."

Amos crouched as if to spring upon the demoralized Bowers.

"I told a lie about Amy," said Nels, his words coming out falteringly from a hairy, bloodstained mouth, and seeming to make little, tinkling sounds, as if being forced through teeth that had suddenly become loosened.

The ring of men, which had been formed around the two combatants and Newt Briggs, growled somewhat angrily.

Outside the ring the voice of Mrs. Bowers, tremulous with fear and apprehension, was demanding that her husband should be allowed to come forth.

"Tom Peters!" screamed Mrs. Bowers, "ain't you a constable? Why don't you protect my husband? They're goin' to kill him! He's hurt! I know he's hurt!"

"Tell us what you saw when you looked in that window, Bowers!" demanded Amos, and there was a ring in his voice which carried a warning. "Tell it all!"

"I saw the young feller doin' a sum on the board," responded Nels, quite promptly. "Amy was sittin' on the front bench watchin' him, with her elbows on her knees an' her chin in her han's. The young feller looked at his watch an' said somethin, an' then they started to run for the train. I hid behind the school-house an' that's all I saw. I lied 'bout Amy; an' you've served me right."

On the following Friday night Pastor Cragg presided over a gathering of the church members, assembled in solemn session. Amos Witherbee was there, but Nels Bowers was absent.

Amos was, naturally, an object of more than ordinary interest.

Elvira Simpson declared to the Widow Barnes that she always had a strong admiration for a brave man. "Now look at Amos," she went on. "He's as brave as they make 'em. Just think of him a-tacklin' that big Nels Bowers. An' my gracious he must be strong! Even if

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