saddle, and Hank came into supper without the basement of his jeans and made sarcastic remarks, the Kid felt himself a born humorist, and one would have thought that capers of this sort was his highest aim in life, but it was he who, after a cold, hard day's work, rode twenty miles on a stormy night to got a surgeon to set the leg Hank had broken in the evening. But pranks are pranks, and the prankee seldom takes the same view of them as does the prankist, and thus it came to pass that the Kid's light-mindedness, together i ith his everlasting jokishness, brought upon him the scorn of his fellow laborers at the "HX." They all liked him well enough, but that was all. They never considered or included him in their plans, except when there was some uncomfortable duty to perform. In fact they paid very little attention to him. Briefly, he acted like a fisteen-year-old boy, and was so treated.

The next spring Miss Mary Brooke appeared on the scene as a visitor to Colonel Hanford, six miles south of us. She came—she saw—and the rest of it. Women were very scarce in our vicinity, especially young and pretty ones, and to our unaccustomed eyes, Venus and the three Graces and all the rest weren't in it with Mary Brooke, and we bowed down and worship-

ped like a lot of half-fledged idiots.

We were all serious too. It was remarkable how much business Boss Fleming had to talk over with the Colonel all of a sudden, and how I, the scribe, took such a fancy to reading and discussing Browning with Mrs. Hanford, who was slightly deaf, and, therefore, not easy to converse with. It was not long, however, before Bass Fleming and I had the running all to ourselves. Fleming, as a near neighbor, a big ranch-owner and a wealthy men, had a strong hold on the Colonel, and I, the scribe, having stuck to my desk in early youth, and being, therefore, able to talk a little on such subjects as interested Mrs. Hapford, had quite captivated her, and the boys, perceiving this state of affirs, discreetly withdrew and spent their evenings

All but the Undressed Kid. He, being from Boston-Miss Brooke's home—also came in for a share of her smiles and conversation, but, as he showed no signs of change in his youthful ways, we didn't pay much attention to him, except to consider him much in the same light as one might a nuisance in kilts. He was in the way, of course, but he didn's cause us

any worry.

To be sure, we wondered how it was that Miss Brooke could tolerate his nonsense and chatter, for ehe was somewhat staid in her ways, and a person whom one would hardly suspect of a liking for levity. The Boss and I were both sure that the Kid's constant presence would begin to pall very soon -briefly, he would make Miss Brooke tired-and we two could fight it out solely between ourselves

But somehow this state of things didn't come to pass. The Kid maneg.d to get in as many calls as did the boss and I, and, what was worse, usually had Miss Brooke pretty much to himself, worse luck to the old folks; and it made Fleming and I very weary to hear her laughing at his time-worn jokes until the tears rolled down her cheeks.

That the Infant had serious intentions never entered our heads. Of course, it was undeniable that Miss Brooke liked him, but that, we assured ourselves, was in a spirit of mere good-natured tolerance. Besides, who ever knew of the Kid having a sweetly solemn thought?

Providence came to our aid about the middle of July in the shape of a telegram stating that the Kid's wealthy father, with whom he had not been on very good terms—that is, no terms at all—had gone the way of huminity, and that the Kid must come home at once to look after his affairs.

We were at Hanford's, Fleming and I, that evening, when the Kid, who had preceded us by an hour or so, took leave of Miss Brooke. He was not going back to the ranch, having had his things sent to town in order to start early in the morning, and he left shortly after we arrived.

Even if we had expected otherwise there was nothing touching in the Kid's leave-taking. While not quite so light in his speech as usual, he could hardly have been accused of seriousness, and he shook hands with

Miss Brooke in the same hearty way as with the rest of us.

Well, the Kid was est-if not for good, for several weeks at least, and the boss and I were alone in the field, and both resolved to make hay while there was no clouds obscuring Sol. We spent a delightful evening, barring each other's presence, and the departed Kid was only mentioned once, and then by Miss Brooke, who laughingly related one of his remarks, adding . "What a jolly, whole souled boy it is, to be sure!"

As we rode home not much was said, but when we came in sight of the light at the "HX" Fleming reined up his horse, cleared his throat and said, huskily: "Scribe, my boy, I reckon we are in the same boat, and we might as well be trank about it. I've"—he cleared his throat again—"made up my mind to have Mary—Miss Brooke—for my wife—if she'll have me. I think you're in the same fix."

I nodded, not being able to answer, and Fleming went on in the same queer voice: "They say all's fair in love and war. I don't believe it. Nothing is fair but justice. We are even now, I think. Let us be fair with

each other, and may the better man win."

And thus it came about that, without any more words, we got to calling at Hanford's on alternate nights—and,—oh, these women!—each fondly believed himself the favored one, if favor there was. Mary,—so I thought of her always now-talked foot-ball with Fleming, who was an ex-member of the Princeton team, and talked books and so forth with me, and we were both as happy as unfortunate men can ever be under like circumstarces.

September first came, and with it a telegram from the Kid. I was in

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town and received it, opening it, as I always did the Boss's telegrams and business letters, to see if it was anything requiring immediate attention. The message was dated from Omaha, and read:

"J. H. Fleming. HX. Ranch,--, Neb .: Will arrive on the third to stay a few days. Take a couple cases beer to the boys.

A. H. WHEELER."

I leaned against a telegraph pole and ponderel. Coming, eh? more untrammeled calls for Fleming and me. No-well, it was high time to be up and doing. But there was the boss, and—this was his night !

I felt like a martyr as I rode out to the ranch and silently handed Jack

the telegram. He read it and looked at me.
"Yes, your night it is," said I, "but I've got to see the Colonel about the joint shipment we're going to make—so I'll go, too. I'll let you alone, though."

As we rode over to Hanford's we tried to keep up the semblance of conversation, but it was not much of a success. We were both thinking very hard.

I had finished my business with the Colonel and we sat down in his den to smoke—the Colonel holding up the conversation. The lamp burned low, and the old gentleman took it away to be refilled, leaving me in darkness. He had hardly gone when Mary and Fleming came up on the porch and seated themselves just outside the window at which I sat.

I felt like a traitor, but dared not move, knowing that they might hear me, and Jack might never be able to get his little speech said. So I had to listen to Jack's great, strong bass tones as he told Mary the old story which there are so few ways of telling. When he had finished there was a brief silence, then Mary's voice said, sorrowfully:

"Ob, Mr. Fleming, I am so sorry-so sorry,-but I never dreamed of such a thing. You and Mr. Faber have been so kind and nice to me, and I lest it all unsaid and I had never known that you—you cared for me—because—if there was no other reason—I have already promised to marry "—(here her voice took on a tinge of laughter)—"the—the 'Undressed Kid.'"

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