

CHAPTER IX.

ALTHOUGH the atmosphere was cold, for there was a silent touch of frost in the air, still the sun, which was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, cast forth his pleasant warmth, making it not disagreeable for a drive across the prairie.

Vernon was punctual, for it was five minutes to two when he pulled up outside the Vaughn mansion. Miss Vaughn was dressed and waiting for him, and soon she was seated in the buggy by his side. After they had waved their hands to Mr. Vaughn, who had handed his daughter into the vehicle, and then stood on the front steps waving his pocket handkerchief to them, Vernon slightly touched the horses with his whip, and the mettlesome animals suddenly plunged, then bounded forward, taking them at a sharp trot down the road. Mr. Vaughn stood and watched them until they disappeared from view; then he turned and went indoors.

The trail across the prairie was hard, for the night's frost had taken a good hold in the ground, and the horses' hoofs rang sharply out, startling