

was in one of his absent moods, and had not heard what his brother had said.

Zotique turned, looked sharply at him, and then broke into a hearty laugh. "You are as absent-minded as ever, Vital," he said jestingly, as he seized him by the arm and marched him into the room.

The guests were seated, but there was still room for four or five more. After jeering them both for being moon-gazers, farmer Charest called Zotique to come and sit by his side. Vital, thus being left alone, wandered off to the foot of the table, and sat down by the side of an old farmer, where there was plenty of room. What made him go so far for a seat when there were others nearer, though not so roomy, will presently be seen. Hardly had he seated himself when he did an unaccountable thing. Sitting as close as he could get to the farmer on his right, he stealthily ran his hand along the bench till it reached his neighbor on his left. The intervening space evidently was satisfactory, for a look of content came over his face, and he turned and looked once more expectantly at the door.

Scarcely had the repast begun when the door was quickly opened, and a young woman, clad in a bewitching white dress, burst into the room. She was out of breath, and had evidently been running.

"Do you know, Madame Charest," she said laughingly, as she advanced, "the reason I am late is—because—well, because"—the color rushed into her face as she hesitated for a few moments—"because it took me so long to dress. There, now, I have told