

to each other. As it was, however, she said nothing and patiently awaited the time when the departure of Lydia would enable her to bring to her house some other young lady with more correct views of matrimony.

Jack was seated in his chair thinking over his plot against the postmaster, and occasionally giving an audible chuckle as the thought of his own ingenuity occurred to him. It was while he was in this enviable frame of mind that Lydia chanced to enter the room.

"Why Jack," said she, "you are in good spirits, what are you laughing at?"

Jack felt rather ashamed at being caught in that fashion and pretended not to hear the question.

"Come," continued Lydia, "you should have no secrets from your chum, what's the fun?"

It was at this crisis in his life that Jack, to use the emphatic language of Nevins, "gave himself away." The fact was he had been trying to solve the problem as to whom he should select to conduct the other end of the correspondence. "He must be trusty," thought Jack, "and clever, and able to imitate a woman's hand writing. I don't know any one that fills the bill." He had reached this stage of his plot when Lydia's voice aroused him from his meditations.

"Do you think you can keep a secret?" said Jack, in answer to her last demand.

"Nonsense Jack," replied Lydia, "don't be mysterious, out with your story. Have you fallen in love with anybody?"

"Now Jack, although a good business man was a man of impulses, and and the suggestion that he was

capable of doing anything so foolish as to fall in love annoyed him so much that, in his anxiety to remove any suspicions of that sort, he was ready to entrust Lydia with his secret plan. "After all," he said to himself, "she may give me some good hints and she won't tell any one I know." Thus Jack reasoned, and acting on the impulse of the moment he put Miss Lydia in possession of the whole plot. "Now," said he, as he concluded, "who can I get to help me?"

"Help you," said she with a saucy toss of her head which made her black curls glance in the sunshine, "why I'll help you Jack, it will be great fun."

Strange to say, Jack had never thought of being assisted in that quarter, and the idea of writing imitation love letters to a real young lady almost alarmed him. But then he thought to himself, if the thing is all understood beforehand what difference can it make? So it happened that Mr. Jack Halsey promptly accepted Miss Lydia's offer to conduct the other end of the correspondence and to assist him in befooling that ancient functionary, the postmaster of Crouchville.

### CHAPTER III.

Before another week from this time, Miss Lydia Baker had taken her departure for her home at Freeport, and in the meantime, all the details of the proposed correspondence had been talked over and arranged. Jack had made up the instructions he received from his fair correspondent in