

A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

CHAPTER I.

The Milbury stage lumbered creakily up the hill, and drew up beneath the big maples in front of the post-office at Merwin's Four Corners.

"Amos thinks o' goin' down t' Milbury with y' t'-day, I b'lieve. He'll be right along now in a minnit, I guess. He's a-sayin' good-by to his mother."

"What's Amos kalkulatin' t' do down the Milbury?" asked the driver, with poignant interest.

"He's a-goin' t' learn printin'!" answered the Squire, shamefacedly.

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dusty sunlight, while the round, brown little weaver sat patiently waiting for unwary flies in the centre of his own magnificence.

The similarity of his own destiny rushed across Amos as he watched the wonderful wheel the spider had spun in this forgotten corner of the abandoned cider mill.

"The Afterthought cast a rapid glance upon him as he passed by the open door on his way to the orchard, and went on in contemptuous silence.

But the editor himself counted the world well lost, and was at peace with all mankind.

At first the subscription list had been a meagre one, the neighboring farmers regarding the enterprise with natural suspicion.

Amos scrupulously restrained his own longings, and moulded the sheet in the interest of the subscribers.

Amos shrank horrified into the shadows as he saw the girl's head resting affectionately upon the Afterthought's shoulder.

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"When do you think he died?" asked the Squire.

"Probably about five o'clock," answered the doctor, reflectively.

"First time I ever knew the 'Mercury' t' be late, Amos," said the farmer, in cheerful surprise.

"Frost's out o' t' ground," he cried excitedly.

"If that doesn't beat all," said the Squire aside to his wife.

"I'll be most time for v'lets now," went on the sick man.

"Tom," he said feebly, "how long hev I ben here like this?"

"The first time in more'n thirty years," he mourned to himself.

"He can't last through the night," said the doctor, softly.

"He may last until morning; he has more vitality than one might suppose," said the doctor.

"Can you print?" he whispered, fixing his sunken blue eyes eagerly upon the face.

"Then it won't come out t'-day," he moaned.

"They're allers trusted me an' t' be ginnin' . . . an' it shall come out, I say."

"He jumped up and struggled violently with the nurse, who made a vain effort to put him back upon the pillows.

"He certainly died in an unexpected fashion," replied the doctor.

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