

CHAPTER ONE

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MRS. HOWARD FEATHERSTONE spent much time thinking up things for her brother Archibald Bennett to do, and as Archie was the ideal bachelor brother, always remembering the children's birthdays and turning up dutifully for Christmas dinners, he accepted her commissions in the most amiable spirit and his services were unfailingly satisfactory. He knew perfectly well that most of the jobs she imposed upon him had been politely but firmly declined by her busy husband, but this made no difference to Archie, who had all the time in the world, and infinite patience, and he rather enjoyed tracing express packages and matching ribbons.

"The agent who's been looking up a summer house for us says this is an unusual opportunity, as there are few places to let at Bailey Harbor and this one is unexpectedly on the market. The owner is obliged to leave just after settling in it, so it's all in perfect condition and if it meets our needs we can go right up. Howard's simply swamped with work — he's conducting some sort of investigation with night meetings and that sort of thing — and we'd all appreciate it if you could run up there for us."

The many preoccupations of his brother-in-law, who held a seat in Congress and took his job seriously, were well known to Archie. Featherstone was an