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THE CONQUEST OF HARBOTTLE

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EBENEZAR HOLBROOK was an ambitious youth. He had been appointed teacher over the Elm Ridge School, but only after a prolonged wrangling among the local ratepayers and trustees. His predecessor, Joshua Harbottle, had been deposed after many years of service, during a portion of which time he divided his energies between educational matters and running a farm. A great many of the present school supporters had passed through his tuition, and though they had reason to remember it, not all of them were anxious to see him deprived of his position. Of late, however, he had become extremely rough and somewhat remiss in his duties. So he had been peremptorily dismissed without the option of resigning, and a much more modern system of education installed. Joshua was exceedingly wrathful regarding this treatment, and promised a lively opposition to his successor. As he had several active sympathisers, it was only after great difficulty that the trustees were able to employ a teacher satisfactory to the majority. Their choice was at best an experiment.

Joshua Harbottle had never been extensively educated, therefore his attainments were little more than rudimentary, and he did not improve with the years. At last his manner became crusty, and his speech ungrammatical. Only the very elementary

portions of knowledge were taught by him. His specialty was arithmetic. But numbers are not everything, therefore a teacher was chosen to handle more extensive branches. In Holbrook they found one who, though only out of his teens, seemed to have amazing educational proficiency. He came to them from the training school with a high recommendation. He had addressed the public meeting of school supporters, and had made a much better impression than a large number of others who had likewise applied. At this meeting he learned fully the state of affairs. He knew that he was facing a grave difficulty.

Elm Ridge was an entirely rural neighborhood. They were remote from towns and cities, and had no railway communication. The one place of public resort was held by a man who, with the aid of his family, filled the joint offices of postmaster, store-keeper, blacksmith, barber, and shoemaker. He was never idle, for he had abundant patronage. The only other public places were the little Union Church and the school-house. Neither of these was at all imposing in appearance. The school-house occupied the corner of Mr. Harbottle's farm, as he believed in having things convenient in the days of his occupancy. The local inhabitants were an easy-going sort, with little other concern than their daily tasks, with an occasional variation, such as