

she still continued to follow it. Her earlier young lady companions had become matrons and the mothers of large families and their places had been filled by younger sisters who had been in their cradles when Jack left college. Jack was very good friends with some of the young ladies with whom he was brought into contact, but none of them made any impression on his heart. "Hang those sentimental girls that read poetry and look so sweet," Jack used to say. "Give me a girl with some life in her and I'll like her, but I won't marry her."

If a girl with plenty of life in her was what Jack desired, he certainly should have felt himself well suited in the young lady who was living with his mother at the time his great plot against the postmaster was being hatched. Lydia Baker had animal spirits enough for three people and Mrs. Halsey could never complain of being lonely when she was with her. Lydia in fact, at times, proved almost too much for her kind hostess. Her sister Amelia, a sort of third or fourth cousin of Mrs. Halsey, had lived with the latter several years before and was a great favorite. Amelia was a very quiet lady-like girl, but Lydia, whom Mrs. Halsey had never seen until she came to her, was a romp. Short of figure and stout of limb, with black eyes and curly black hair, which was allowed to fly about pretty much as it pleased, she looked rugged enough for almost any adventure and had she lived on the Scottish border four centuries ago would have been the very ideal of a moss trooper's wife. Unfortunately modern civilization seldom affords any scope for the genius of persons of this stamp, and

so Lydia Baker was merely a tom boy who could scamper over the country on the back of a half tamed horse, or fire pistols at a mark or do half a dozen other things to cause the average female to shudder. Lydia always declared that she wished she had been born a man and every one who knew her admitted that nature had made a great mistake in dooming her to wear petticoats all her life.

Lydia Baker had been about six months with Mrs. Halsey and in a few days was about to return to Freeport where her parents lived. The old lady liked the girl, but felt quite sure that she never would do for her son, Jack. "He wants," she would say, "a quiet woman, one that will keep him home at night. Now Lydia, if she had him would be towing him all over the country. Besides," she would add, "Lydia is too young, why she is only 19."

If Jack had heard this little speech he would probably have remarked sarcastically that his good mother was quite aware of Lydia's tender years when she invited her to the house, and that Lydia would have been better liked if she had been willing to make love to Jack himself. At quite an early period of her visit, however, Lydia had informed Jack that she had not come there to set her cap for him; that she did not want him, and in fact, would not marry him on any consideration. In this way she speedily won his friendship, and the two became what Lydia described in her own vernacular as "chums." They were constantly together, and if it had not been that Mrs. Halsey had herself overheard Lydia's declaration of principles to Jack, she might have believed they were becoming attached