

Miss Acres. So to hurry things on, I took rather a fancy to the fellow."

"It seems he had lived down here, or somewhere near here, for a while, a year or so ago, and was slightly acquainted with some of the people. When he learned where I came from he enquired after a number of them. He mentioned your name, Miss Ashley, several times. He knew you personally, or perhaps it was your cousin; no, I think it was you; at all events he had heard of your engagement to Merton, though how in the world, or rather out of it—for that district can hardly be called in it—he ever did hear of it I give up. Of course, however, good news and so forth, but even then—oh yes, I understand, and if Merton were here, he would, without doubt, acknowledge the delicate compliment handsomely. Well, to proceed, I told him everything of interest that I could think of. How long you and Merton had been engaged; when you were likely to be married, and what a loving couple you'd make, and things of that sort. Now, really I did, Miss Ashley; it seemed to interest the fellow, you see; in fact if I hadn't known that last winter was your first season out, I would really have set him down as one of your numerous conquests; but I digress, as the books say. To proceed, then. I haven't been telling you all this time of the horrible racket the wind kept up. I think the rain had stopped by that time, but the wind was frightful. T854W

"Every time any one went out or in, as soon as the door was loose, it blew open with a bang that shook the whole building, and it took considerable pushing; and

shoving to get it shut again. Twice every light in the room went out.

"Well, while we were sitting there finishing a last cigar,—it was about a quarter past eleven, I think,—a man came in, and walked hurriedly over to our corner. He had a short whispered conversation with my friend, the engineer, and then went into the back room and returned in a moment with a lighted lantern. Raymond in the meantime had thrown away his cigar, and was preparing to go out.

"It isn't train time yet," I said; "where are you going?"

"He turned, and said quietly: "It seems part of the bridge has blown away, and something must be done to stop the express. It comes from the other side, you know. I think you said your friend was on it; perhaps you would like to come with us."

"Upon my word he might have been asking me to have a cigar from the way he said it, and yet I couldn't help but see from the set look in his face, and the whiteness of it, that something pretty bad must have happened.

"The three of us went out together, and made our way, holding on to each other, down the road to the bridge. Several times the wind almost blew me off my feet, and a blacker night I never looked into. Every time a leaf, twig, or anything blown by the wind struck my face, it stung like a cut from the lash of a whip.

"It may have been that the last cigar I smoked was too strong or something, but I tell you when I lay down on the edge of that bank, with my arm tight around a broken piece of timber at the side of the bridge, and tried to gaze down through the blackness to where I could hear the dull sullen roar of the water below,—and I knew that the midnight express was due in thirty-five minutes, with Merton on board, and no way to get word across nearer than a small wooden bridge, probably wrecked by this time, two miles below, a feeling came over me that I had never experienced before in my life, and hope never to know again.

"When I crawled back



"Sitting there finishing a last cigar."