

pies—for the mince-meat had been standing in its crude state in the larder for weeks back, its spices and raisins and meats commingling into one superb flavor fit for the gods, if they work like Vulcan and have the digestive powers of the ostrich. Still giving loose run to his fancies, he helped her tie up the huge plum-pudding, that, like the mince-meat, had been compounded long before. He was just dropping it into the pot when the conductor came round, and it is not surprising to us, who know his thoughts, that in answer to the query whether he was going, he replied "Puddingville."

The conductor laughed.

"Most people are going to that place at this season," he said; "but where is your particular Puddingville situated?"

Peter blushed almost as violently as though the conductor had guessed and told his thoughts, and quickly corrected his mistake.

"Why don't you say Elizabethtown?" asked a rough voice in his ear.

"There is no such place on this line," said the conductor, stolidly, as he punched Peter's ticket.

Feeling as though he would like to treat the first speaker as the conductor had treated his ticket, Peter turned and stared the man in the face.

"What! have you forgotten your old friends already?" said the man, extending a hairy, sun-burned hand over the back of the car seat to Peter; "then it's a poor chance them as is dearer to you will stand in a hour or two."

"How do you do, Bolton!" said Peter, coldly, affecting not to notice the proffered hand. "Are all the folks well?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Well enough, but one, who might be doing better than cry her eyes out over a fellow as is never satisfied with his place. But she'll get over it, I don't doubt. Leastways she will, if Jim Fowler can help her."

Peter felt a twinge of remorse, and, ignoring Bolton's reference to Fowler, asked—

"Has she really been unhappy, Bolton?"

"A, she has; the bigger fool, she."

"I am sorry," broke in Peter; "I would not have made her unhappy for"—and here he stopped. Pained as he was, he could not say so, for no man can reveal the depth of his love to another. He remained silent, wrapped in regretful thoughts.

Bolton was Lizzie's brother, and Fowler was a young farmer of the neighborhood, noted for all the rascality and brutality that a farmer can indulge in, but particularly for his fondness for the "Eagle's Nest," the only tavern in Prankville, or for miles around. Bolton himself was not far behind his friend, if, indeed, he did not fall behind him in these particulars merely to excel him in others equally bad. That Bolton and Lizzie were brother and sister one could scarcely believe. Mr. Tilton, in youth, had been as wild as any of the young men of the back country, and on fair day had often thrashed his man. But he was not naturally vicious. The sin of the race must go farther back than Mr. Tilton to find the explanation of his son's temperament. Of Lizzie and Bolton, it might be said with Tennyson—

"She to him was nothing akin;
Some peculiar mystical grace
Made her only the child of her mother,
And heaped the whole inherited sin
On that huge scape-goat of the race—
All, all upon the brother."

At least that was what Peter thought, though he endeavored not to say it, for a long time; nor did he say it until it was forced from him by Bolton's conduct. In the years gone by—not very many of them, for Peter was only nineteen and Bolton twenty-four—the two young men had been friends, cronies almost. But Bolton began to drift down the current, and an almost imperceptible breach took place between the two, which widened slowly as Bolton saw Peter's love for Lizzie. Big brothers, sometimes like nothing better than to exert their authority in warning off ardent lovers, no matter how eligible they may be. No one is good enough for their sisters, whom, however, they continue to treat privately, with the old accustomed scorn, as girls. These brothers usually make the important discovery that there is a lover at the time when opposition is too late, and their disapprobation is most keenly felt. At least this was the case with Peter, Lizzie and Bolton. The last named discovered how the land lay about a month or two after the old folk had come to the conclusion that if the girl wanted Peter she might have him, though he was not quite good enough for her. Jim Fowler had tried to win Lizzie's affections, but was put to an inglorious flight. It was he who put it into Bolton's head that Peter was in love with Lizzie. Bolton got furious at once, largely because he had heard the fact from Fowler. Down in the depths of his not over acute mind lurked the idea that it was weakness for a girl to fall in love; and, therefore, coupling this idea with the fact that his sister's lover was Peter, he had as pretty a pair of steeds to drive him to desperation and absurdity as a man could wish for.

He was foiled in every quarter.

Peter loyally confessed his love and his unworthiness, but stoutly held that he was as good as Lizzie could possibly get, be he nobleman or commoner, or, as we say in Canada, rich or poor.

Lizzie sought a woman's refuge—silence and tears—and her citadel remained untaken, while her parents greeted their son with the startling remark that they could get along very well without his interference, and hoped he would come to them in future with his tales, and leave the young people alone.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there was a coolness between Bolton and Peter. What surprised Peter and made him suspicious, was that Bolton should speak to him at all.

His meeting with Bolton changed Peter's plans a little. He would arrive at Prankville at about eight o'clock, and he had intended going home, and visiting Lizzie next morning. But now that her brother knew of his coming, he knew that Lizzie would soon know also, and thus be deprived of the pleasant surprise he meant to give her. So he determined to seek Lizzie first before going home at all.

Prankville was only a flag station on those days, and few people ever came to the station. There was