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say no. Instead he quite eagerly con-
sented to take them in, and the horse
was led to the drive-barn.
Miss Winters, after being introduced to
Mrs. King, though she appeared perfect-
ly modest in her deportment, reiterated
her strong affection for Mr. Westlake,
and said she would marry him even
though she were entirely cast off by her
parents. The farmer's wife sympathized
deeply with the girl, and in a short
time, had quite taken her into her
heart.
As the men were coming from the barn
a few minutes later, and were about to
step up on the veranda, Harold noticed
a tall gentleman, dressed in clerical
attire, coming up the road from the
east. Mr. King also observed him at
that moment.
"Say!" he exclaimed, "there goes
that minister who has been staying
down here at Williamses for the last
two weeks. He says he's from Toronto,
and is spending his holidays down there.
Now's your chance, Mister, to have this
knot tied right here."
"Sure as taxes, that's the man!"
said Harold enthusiastically. "Baker
they call him, wasn't it?" Say, you're
in luck."
Westlake was visibly overjoyed.
"Just the thing!" he exclaimed.
"This is luck for once." Then he turned
excitedly to the young lady, who at
this moment came to the doorway with
Mrs. King. "What do you say, Winnie,
to having a minister marry us right
here?" Mr. King says that gentleman
walking past is a Toronto minister
staying in the vicinity. Shall we call
him?"
The girl did not hesitate to answer.
"Yes, by all means, if he is ordained.
Do you know that, Mr. King?"
"Not certain, but we'll call him and
find out," replied the farmer heartily.
Then he shouted:
"Halloo, Mr. Baker! Come in!"
Harold ran down towards the gate to
explain.
"I beg your pardon, Mr. Baker, for
calling you; but there is a couple in
here who would like to get married as
soon as possible. It's an elopement it
seems, but the parties are certainly old
enough to know what they're doing.
They've only stopped here because their
horses is fagged out, and it's a good
eight miles to Waterville. Mrs. Williams
told me you were a minister, and I
presume you are ordained."
"Yes, I am ordained, certainly," re-
turned the man in evident surprise, at
the same time searching his white waist-
coat pockets. "I am assistant pastor
of the Metropolitan Methodist Church in
Toronto, as my card here will show
you. However, I am a little dubious
about marrying such couples. I should
like to see them, though. If they are
determined to marry, they will get
married sooner or later, I suppose."
"Well, come right in, Mr. Baker," re-
turned Harold, now beginning to get a
good deal of enjoyment out of what
seemed to him a very romantic affair.
Accordingly, Mr. Baker was taken into
the house and introduced to all the
parties, especially to the interested
pair. After a few rather pointed ques-
tions, which seemed to be answered sat-
isfactorily enough, the minister re-
marked:
"Well, I see no harm in marrying you
under the circumstances. I haven't my
book containing the ceremonial service,
but as I have joined together a good
many couples during the fifteen years of
my ministry, you see I have it all
memorized."
"And have you a certificate with
you?" asked the young lady, somewhat
coyly—and yet, earnestly, too. "We
must have a certificate."
Mr. Baker flushed slightly.
"No, I haven't," said he, "but I
have two or three down at Mr.
Williams'. I'll just skip down and get
one. It's only a few steps, and I'll be
back inside of ten minutes." And al-
most in the twinkling of an eye, the
man was out of the door and trotting
down the lane at a remarkably brisk
pace for one who appeared to be forty
at least.
When he returned, after some little
time, he carried with him a small suit-
case.
"Mr. Westlake, I was just wondering
as I was going back," said he, "whether
I could ride with you to Waterville. I
have a little business to attend to down
there, and wish to stay over night. I

will walk back in the morning. That's
why I brought my suitcase." And he
smiled somewhat graciously.
"Why certainly; it would be mean of
us not to reciprocate an accommoda-
tion," returned Mr. Westlake, who turn-
ing with a smile to the young lady,
asked:
"Now, Winnie, are you ready?"
"Yes," responded Winnie, bravely
enough; whereupon Mr. Baker asked the
couple to rise and stand in the centre
of the sitting-room floor.
"Have you a ring?" he inquired of the
groom.
"I have," answered the young man.
"Very well," said the minister, who
without the slightest hesitation, and in
a firm, musical voice, began the service.
The responses of the two were given in
the most serious manner; and in less
than three minutes, they were duly pro-
nounced man and wife.
At that moment, Mr. King, after a
loud guffaw, shouted out:
"Well, it's up to us to kiss the
bride."
"Shame on you!" protested his wife;
but, nothing daunted, the man stepped
forward, drew the yielding young wo-
man toward him, and saluted her with
a loud smack.
Harold was too bashful to follow suit;
but his mother performed her duty in
that respect; and then, after a little
joking was indulged in, the certificate
was brought out by Mr. Baker, who
took a seat at the table, and proceeded
to fill it in.
"Of course, to make this legal," said
he a minute later, "we must have wit-
nesses. Will you sign here, Mr. King?"
"Sure," responded the farmer jovially,
and he sat down beside the minister
and wrote his signature in a fairly good
bold hand on the line indicated.
"Now, Mrs. King," said the clergyman,
"if you will be so kind, you may just
sign opposite,—right on this line."
The woman did so. A blotter was
then placed upon the certificate, which
was, with little delay, rolled, tied, and
handed over. After the paying of the
fee, and a brief, but animated, conver-
sation, the groom said he believed they
had better go on, as they would just
have time to catch the two-thirty train
out of Waterville.
Five minutes later, the horse consider-
ably refreshed, was at the door; the
three got in; and, after extending pro-
fuse thanks to the farmer and his wife,
they departed.
It was not more than fifteen min-
utes later when the telephone bell rang.
Harold answered the call. Had it been
possible for us to have heard the entire
conversation, it would have been this:
"Hello, Harold."
"Hello, that you, Ray?"
"You're right."
"When did you get back from
Batavia?"
"About an hour ago. Say, Mr. Baker
was just up at your place, wasn't he?"
"Yes, he performed a marriage cere-
mony. Great sport, Ray."
"That's why I called you up. I'm
afraid, old fellow, Mr. Baker is only an
alias. He's no more a minister than
I am. From my peek at him, and from
father's and mother's description, he's
the very same man I saw near Batavia
two weeks or more ago; and when the
three went by in a buggy a few minutes
ago, I concluded that the couple is also
the same couple. It's a swindle
Harold,—and a mighty big one."
"A swindle? How?"
"Did your father sign anything?"
"Yes, a marriage certificate, as wit-
ness."
"It's the same old game, Harold.
Your father signed a promissory note,
and for a good big sum."
"A promissory note?"
"Yes. Did he look it over before he
signed?"
"No I guess not."
"Well, I'm sorry. These three have
been playing this game here and there
all over the States, and as they can
get so far away before there is any
suspicion aroused, they've escaped cap-
ture. But say, it's not too late, per-
haps. Where did they say they were
going?"
"Waterville."
"Of course, that's where your father
is well known to the bank. They'll
cash that note and skidoo. Tell your
father to throw on his coat, and you
do the same, and come down double

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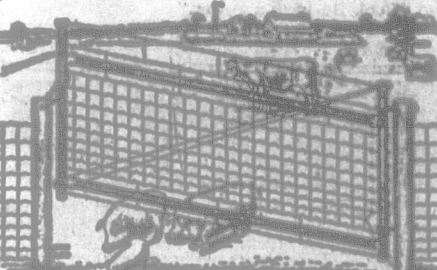
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quick. I'll have the car ready, and
we'll give them a chase for life. Per-
haps we can catch them before they get
out of the bank—or even at the station,
Hurry!"
"All right. Good-by!" returned
Harold; and he flung up the receiver.
Needless to say, explanations were
short: In a jiffy, Harold and his father
were running like race horses down to
the Williams', where Ray, with his hands
on the steer-wheel of his car, was ready
to start.
Without a word, the two mounted up
into the tonneau, and away they went
down the road like the wind.
"They've got about forty-five minutes
the start of us, but you got down here
in such a hurry, I believe we're going to
land them," said Harold over his
shoulder.
"But are you sure it's a fake?" asked
King, all in a tremble.
"Yes, quite sure. But don't worry.
They didn't know your next neighbor
had happened to return from a country
where they had last operated. It will
be some surprise."
"Let her go, Ray," urged King.
"We've got to catch them—or I'll be
ruined."
But there was no necessity for urging.
The car was literally bounding over the
none-too-smooth a road. It was well
that there were no speed inspectors look-
ing on.
"They must have plied the gad!" ex-
claimed Harold, ten minutes later.
"Here we are within half a mile of the
bank, and they're nowhere in sight."
"We'll probably catch one of them
right in the bank, I'm thinking," re-
turned Ray. "That's where they'll go
first, for they've learned that your
father here is good for the note; they
found that out from our preacher who
has pumped father and mother during
the last week, and the three have been
in communication."
"Oh, but wasn't I a fool? Wasn't I
a fool?" reiterated King, now almost
beside himself.
They were by this time spinning along
Main Street within two blocks of the
bank. In another moment they had
pulled up before the building, and Ray
stopped the machine. All three men
jumped out.
"Westlake's in there, sure, as time!"
almost whispered Harold, peering
through the plate glass in the door.
"Look back there at the wicket."
"The other two have made for the sta-
tion, I suppose," responded Ray. "I'll
skip for one of the constables. They
won't be far away, for I telephoned
them to be on the watch. You two go
on in, and look after your note. But
don't let them escape."
"All right, Ray," responded King, now
very much on the alert. "You bet your
boots he doesn't get out of our clutches
this time."
The two opened the door and entered;
but Harold remained on guard just in-

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