

## The Laggard and the Leap Year Lark.

Written for the Western Home Monthly.  
By Edith G. Bayne.



"So he hasn't proposed yet!"

It was Alec Patton from 'Varsity who thus exclaimed. He had followed his mother out to the kitchen where

sundry delicious odors heralded the approach of the big dinner.

"No, nor never will it seem," answered Mrs. Patton as she removed two pies from the oven. "Calamity don't say much but she's doin' a heap o' thinkin'."

"Well, if there's anything slower than Jasper Titewadd I'd like to know about it," continued Alec. "Why, when Walt and I were home Christmas and Easter, too, we thought it would come off this June without fail. He doesn't know about Uncle Jim leaving Cally that money last fall?"

"No, and we're not lettin' on about it either."

"That's right. Keep it from the old stiff. Gee! Six years and he hasn't come to the point yet!"

"Sh— Here's Cally."

A medium sized, rather plain-looking girl now made an appearance. She had red hair and a generous supply of freckles, but her expression and manner were so pleasant, that one lost sight of her physical drawbacks at once.

"How are the chickens, mother?"

"Done to a turn, Cally."

"You go back to the parlor, Cally, and help entertain," interposed Alec, "and I'll see mother through this."

And suiting the action to the word, he seized on a bowl of gravy and a pile of hot plates and proceeded to demonstrate his ability as a first-class waiter by holding both at arm's length and side-stepping into the dining room, while his mother and sister held their breaths.

Calamity Jane Patton returned to the company of her other college brother, Walter, his classmate, "Blondy" Bennet, some neighbor friends and the remainder of the family, all of whom were to dine in honor of the homecoming of the boys for the summer vacation.

"Jasper's coming over to-morrow night," whispered Mrs. Patton to Alec as together they "placed" the chairs.

"Oh, he is, is he? Been rushing any-one else this spring?"

"No, he's here just as often as' seems just as fond of Cally, only he says nothing."

"Well," replied Alec, with the air of a tenth-season matchmaker, "it's got to come off; it's too good a hitch-up to miss. Cally's had her trunks ready three years now and she's a good 'catch' if I do say it."

For the past six years Jasper Titewadd, a bachelor of means, without a relation to bless himself with, had been Calamity Jane Patton's acknowledged "company." His farm, in the hands of hired help and overlooked by himself, was in a flourishing condition. During the summers of those six years he had driven and ridden, picknicked and boated with Calamity, and when the arrival of King Frost had changed the order of their pleasures they had spent the evenings sleigh-riding, dancing, or sitting quietly by the Patton fireside. They had been to all the fairs, dinners, dances, barn-raising and church "eats" together; they had roasted chestnuts; pulled taffy and popped corn in each other's company. But as yet the interesting question had never been popped. A careful diagnosis of the case would have revealed neither bashfulness on Jasper's part nor lack of charm on the part of Calamity. Furthermore, not only the Pattons themselves were "talking" about the long courtship, but the entire village had been stirred for years over it, and when all other gossip had run itself out there

was always this topic to come back to, each time with renewed zest. Mrs. Perkins had always maintained that "no good would ever come of givin' a girl a name like that!" Indeed, at the young lady's christening everyone had shaken their heads and prophesied

everything of a disastrous nature for the Pattons, from a fire to a flood. But she had been named for Uncle Jim Patton's wife long deceased, and he had nobody to whom he could leave his money except his brother's children, of whom Calamity became his favorite, at

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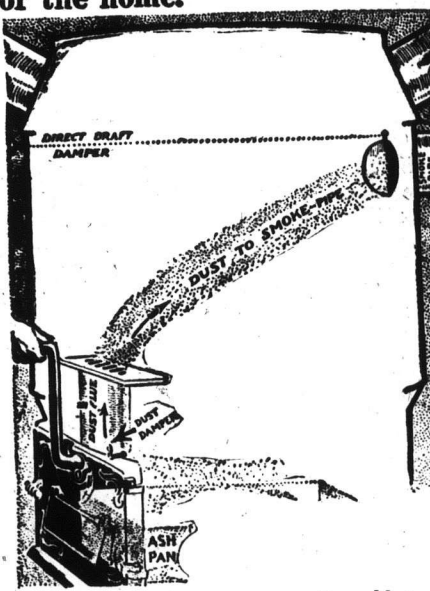
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