ht of the glorious as the stage sciver e door-step, with my bag, just as the sunigh a shield of loweracross the old house. with orange light, nall window-panes to

n born and brought up and all this wide, wild landscape, co. ored with autumn forests and scented with dead leaves, was new and marvelous in my sight.

I was a Philadelphia shop girl. You see there was no glamour of romance about my life. I worked for my living. like many another, lived quietly in scant and forlorn lodgings, and felt, sally enough that my lot in life was to be a chrysalis'rather than a butterfly's until Fayal & Co. failed, and, hearing that I was out of employment, my unknown cousins at Sumac Farm wrote for me to come and spend the winter with

They welcomed me kindly after their fashion. Uncle Blake gave me a kiss. and remarked dubiously that "I didn't favor any of the Blakes that ever he knew of." Barbara, his daughter, wondered why I looked so pale. Jonas brought his pretty young wife-who had been a Mildmay-to greet me; and her brother Walter, who was boarding there, also shook hands politely with me and "hoped I should like the country, in an indifferent way.

The fire of huge logs blazed and crack- laid it down at my feet. ed in the deep, smoke-blackened chim ney-place, and the leaves rustled against the doorstep outside, and a cricket chirped shrilly under the hearth, and it was all so strange-so strange, yet so restful!

"Do you like it, Cousin Olga!" quettish hitle Barbara Blake asked Coquestion, as she flitted to and fro, apparently intent upon the arrangement of the supper-table, while all the time she kept a bright eye on Walter Mildmay, who sat by the light, mending a defective spot in the harness.

"Very much," I said quietly. Walter did not look up, but I could feel his quiet eye on me all the time. I wondered what he thought of me. I thought, uneasily, of my dusty dress, Jonas Blake's detaining hand, and flew my disheveled hair, the stiff, unbecoming out into the starry cold of the outer air. linen collar which I had chosen to wear instead of the lace frill which best suited my face. Not that I wanted him to admire me; but every woman likes to appear to the best advantage, and I was no whit different from the rest of my sex.

Mrs. Jonas Blake went out to skim the ed to attend a "District School Meeting" somewhere. Walter and Barbara had been invisible for sometime; and after

> I rose and went out into the beyond, vaguely desirous of panionship besides my own.

muslin-draped glass that hung bove

latter I certainly was not, at four-and

twenty. Stiff, I might be-who could

avoid that, in the presence of utter

strangers, surrounded by a domestic

atmosphere that was entirely novel to

me? And ugly-was I that? I looked

straight back from a pale, oval face,

hair away from my temples, and fasten-

ed a spray of coral-red wild berries

which I had gathered on the roadside

was returning to my cheeks, the bril.

ning up to me and giving me a kiss.

The weather was beautiful and balmy

ditions and boating parties, and

und the

liance of my eyes.

grown into it.

cannot help it."

only drank his coffee.

ed like that? He should see !

the home-made dressing-table.

went

I could not tell whether he still thought me a "stiff, ugly old maid," or not.

And then came the husking frolic. The barn was all illuminated by candles, stuck in tin sconces, along the sides-I had never seen so wild and romantic a sight. The neighborhood gathered to the gala Mrs. Jonas and

Barbara had been baking cake and buttering sandwiches all day, while Uncle Blake had rolled a barrel of sparkling cider close to the barn-door. Merry laughter sounded, bright faces glanced to and fro in the Rembrandtesque light of the caudles, while ever and anon, the tone o' flute and fiddletuning up in the barn-loft was plainly

I had been helping Mrs. Jonas to put the icing on the big fruit cake which held the ring, and it was late when 1 came into the big sweet-smelling, echong barn, with my black cashmere dress all sprinkled with cherry-red bows, and a cluster of deep-scarlet autumn leaves

"Here's Olga!" cried my Cousin Jonas, cheerily, 'Come here, little Olga, and sit by me, and I'll give you ears to husk.'

I laughed and nestled down into the hay, close at his side; and just at this moment a storm of merry, rustic laugh-

The red ear! the red ear!" they cried, in chorus, clapping their hands and cheering vehemently. "Walter Mildmay has got the red ear. I looked up a t Cousin Jonas.

"What is a red ear !" said I. Cousin Jonas laughed

"What a little greenborn it is!" "The red ear is-Just then, Walter Mildmay came up and stood before me, the rich marooncolored ear of corn in his hand.

"I claim my privilege, Olga," I looked up at him, in amazement

"I don't understand you, said I. The next moment he had stooped over me, and putting both hands lightly on my shoulder, had imprinted kiss upon my astonished lips.

sprang up, feeling myself grow scarlet; I rubbed my lips passionately with my handkerchief, as if to wipe of the insult.

"How dare you?" I cried. "Oh. 1 never will forgive you in the worldnever, never

And then, half-maddened by the noisy laughter of the crowd, the din of jubilant voices, I tore myself from Mrs. Jonas followed me.

"Olga," she cried, "what is the matter? Come back, child. "He has insulted me !" I sobbed

"Insulted you? Oh, what nopsense, Olga !" said Mrs. Jonas, putting After supper they left me all alone. her arm caressingly around my neck. "He has paid you the highest complimilk. My cousin and his father vanish- ment a man could pay a woman. There's not a girl in the barn to-night but envies you, child. Don't you know what the red ear means?" ctting dreamily for awhile before the

'No," said I, looking up at her with wondering eyes. Mrs. Jonas laughed.

"It means that the lucky finder vas there, but I heard the thereof is entitled to kiss the prettiest the shed at the rear, girl in the room," said she. "It has his privilege from time imme. this case it means that hinks that Oloa Blake

are not really angry with

as Mildmay's voice, close to me. Jonas made some exclamation spout the cake she had promised to cut. and slipped away into the darkness. leaving us alone.

1 did not "Angry?" I repeated. "Yes, I was angry. But I didn't know-no one ck into the m, lighted the " About our rustic usages? But you into the little,

will forgive me, Olga?" My presence of mind was slowly com-

ing back to me. I drew my hand away Stiff, ugly, and an old maid! The from his. "But you didn't seriously think me

-pretty ?" said I. "Do you want me to say what]

seriously did think?" he asked. "Yes," said I, laughing. "The truth, now; 'the whole truth, and nothing but the truth !'

into the glass, to see hair banded "Then," said he. "I thought you eyes heavy with weariness, cheeks quite the sweetest, prettiest, most actually colorless. Did he think I always lookperfect creature that Providence ever

So I went to bed, and cried myself to "Not at all !" I retorted, demurely. I am a 'stiff, ugly old maid.' And if The next morning, I got up and this is the sort of girl they turn out in dressed myself with care. I brushed Philadelphia, you prefer the country pared to turnish all kinds of stock in his line of business the soft, crimped masses of jet-black specimens!

I could see the color flood his face, even in the starlight. "Olga," he said, "did you hear into it, and, knotting my loose scarlet that?

silk neckti under my lace collar, I "I did hear it, Walter," I responded. smiled to see the soft glow of color that "I was a fool-a rash, talkative, indiscreet fool !" said he. "Whatever my first impression may have been, 1 My dress was of black cashmere, en- think very differently now. Dear Olga, livened here and there by a bow of may I say all that is in my heart?" scarlet ribbon, instead of the gray "I think we had better go back to

travelling-suit I had worn the evening the barn now," said I, quietly. before, and it fitted me as if I had "And I think we had better not! pleaded Walter, gently venturing to "I don't think I am quite so ugly as detain me. "Listen, Olga. Even the Notary Public, Conveyancer, &c., I was last night," I thought. "But if most wretched criminal that stands at Mr. Mildmay don't like me, of course I the bar is entitled to insist upon a hearing in his own defense. Shall I be less So I went down stairs, and Uncle favored than he ! Blake stared at me over his spectacle-

"Well, I hesitated, "if you have really anything to say-"

"Mercy on us !" cried Mrs. Jones : When we came back into the barn, "what has the girl been doing to her- the husking was over, the debris was all cleared away, and they were dancing to "Some one must have changed her the rude music of the band-"Killaroff while she slept !" said Barbara, run- ney," I believe, was the air. My cheeks were burning, my eyes shone Walter Mildmay said nothing; he my heart danced, also, to the wild, swaying music.

How I enjoyed the next fortnight! Mrs. Jonas looked keenly at me. "Ah!" said she, "I thought how it wond all description. We had nutting would be. You are-engaged? Oh, I am so glad! For your sake, and Walrather brilliant autumn ter's, too !"

"And so am I," said I, quietly. I am a farmer's wife now, and live in THEOPS. S. DESBRISAY. a little brown cottage near Sumac Farm. me up And, fancifully tied with blue ribbon, over the parlor mantle, hangs an ear of corn-a re ear.

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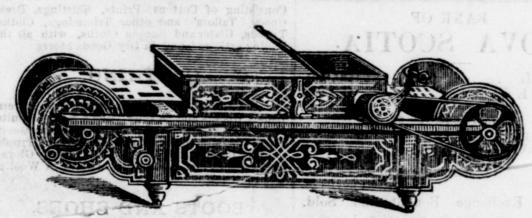
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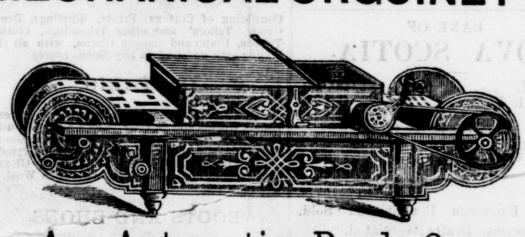
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