

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 raved a barrel of sparkling new cider close to the barn-door.

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

"Here's Olga!" cried my Cousin Jonas, cheerily, "Come here, little Olga, and sit by me, and I'll give you some 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 laughter rose on the air.

"The red ear! the red ear!" they cried, in chorus, clapping their hands and cheering vehemently. "Walter Midway has got the red ear."

I looked up at Cousin Jonas, in bewilderment.

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

"What a little greenhorn it is!" said he. "The red ear is—"

Just then, Walter Midway came up and stood before me, the rich maroon-colored ear of corn in his hand. He laid it down at my feet.

"I claim my privilege, Olga," he said.

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 a kiss upon my astonished lips.

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

"How dare you!" I cried. "Oh, I never will forgive you in the world—never, never!"

And then, half-maddened by the noisy laughter of the crowd, the din of jubilant voices, I tore myself from Jonas Blake's detaining hand, and flew out into the starry cold of the outer air.

"Olga," she cried, "what is the matter? Come back, child."

"He has insulted me!" I sobbed. "Insulted you? Oh, what nonsense, Olga!" said Mrs. Jonas, putting her arm caressingly around my neck.

"He has paid you the highest compliment 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?"

"No," said I, looking up at her with wondering eyes.

Mrs. Jonas laughed. "It means that the lucky finder thereof is entitled to kiss the prettiest girl in the room," said she. "It has been his privilege from time immemorial. In this case it means that Olga Blake thinks that Olga Blake is not really angry with—"

Mrs. Midway's voice, close to me.

Jonas made some explanation about the cake she had promised to eat, and slipped away into the darkness, leaving us alone.

"Angry!" I repeated. "Yes, I was angry. But I didn't know—no one had told me—"

"About our rustic usages? But you will forgive me, Olga?"

My presence of mind was slowly coming back to me. I drew my hand away from his.

"But you didn't seriously think me pretty?" said I.

"Do you want me to say what I seriously *did* think?" he asked.

"Yes," said I, laughing. "The truth, now: 'the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?'"

"Then," said he, "I thought you the sweetest, prettiest, most actually perfect creature that Providence ever made!"

"Not at all!" I retorted, demurely. "I am a 'stiff, ugly old maid.' And if this is the sort of girl they turn out in Philadelphia, you prefer the country specimens!"

"Olga," he said, "did you hear that?"

"I did hear it, Walter," I responded. "I was a fool—a rash, talkative, indiscreet fool!" said he. "Whatever my first impression may have been, I think very differently now. Dear Olga, may I say all that is in my heart?"

"I think we had better go back to the barn now," said I, quietly.

"And I think we had better not!" pleaded Walter, gently venturing to detain me. "Listen, Olga. Even the most wretched criminal that stands at the bar is entitled to insist upon a hearing in his own defense. Shall I be less favored than he?"

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

When we came back into the barn, the husking was over, the debris was all cleared away, and they were dancing to the rude music of the band—"Kilbarney," I believe, was the air. My cheeks were burning, my eyes shone; my heart danced, also, to the wild, swaying music.

Mrs. Jonas looked keenly at me. "Ah!" said she, "I thought how it would be. You are engaged? Oh, I am so glad! For your sake, and Walter's, too!"

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Notice is hereby given that the partnership heretofore existing under the name of

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Highest market price paid for hides.

WILLIAM TROY, Chatham, Sep 26th, 1881.

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E. P. Williston, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW, Notary Public, Conveyancer, &c., Office—Over Mr. John Brandon's Store, Entrance Side Door, Newcastle, Miramichi, N. B.

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WM. A. PARK, Attorney-at-Law, Solicitor, NOTARY PUBLIC, CONVEYANCER, &c., OFFICE—OVER THE STORE OF W. PARK, Esq., CASTLE STREET, NEWCASTLE, N. B.

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LAW BLANKS

MIRAMICHI BOOKSTORE.

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AND FURNITURE EMPORIUM.

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J. McDONALD, Executors. JAMES McDONALD, J. HITCHCOCK, Miramichi, 25th Nov. 1881.

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