

seems to them now to be what they call supernatural. The cause of my belief in this you will discover as we progress along the path of my story."

After this delivery my friend settled himself into a more comfortable position and began his story, which, without the use of quotation marks, I shall place before the reader, as follows:

Bob Paxton and I were school fellows, at Farmington academy, during two consecutive years, ending in the December of 1850. We roomed together, boarded together at the home of a relative of his, and pursued the same studies. There was a difference of but a few months in our ages, both having advanced well into our twentieth years.

About the middle of December of our last year at the academy, Prof. Dobbins extended to us an earnest invitation to remain his guest during the holidays. To make the invitation more seductive, he announced to us that his guests would be few, and that among them would be two young ladies, cousins of his wife.

We gladly accepted the invitation, and like most young fellows of our years, began seriously to speculate regarding the outcome of our prospective introduction to the professor's young lady guests.

We had formed a plan, a few months previous to this, to go to California the following year, and make our fortunes; but now that commendable scheme appeared to be in great danger of being thwarted, for we actually began to feel that we were sure to fall in love with the young ladies; that they would return our affection we did not doubt. Thus, do "coming events cast their shadows before." I had never known Bob to be seriously inclined, but now, shades of anxiety swept over his unusually handsome countenance.

"What shall we do, Arthur," he abruptly asked me, one evening, as we sat

in our room, neglecting our lessons, "if they should turn out to be as ugly as the fabled harpies?"

"Do the agreeable, of course; we can endure them for a week, anyway, and then work up an excuse to get away. But," I queried, in return, "if they should be as beautiful as Hebe?"

"That will make a delightful difference; we'll be in clover, then."

Thus the time passed, with us, until the day before Christmas. At 10:00 a. m. of that day, the merry jingle of sleigh bells at the door announced their arrival. Two hours later an invitation to come down to the drawing room put us to our mettle. At this late day I am willing to acknowledge that I was frightened, more so than I was years after when chased by the natives, in the bush of Australia, or when struggling in the turgid flood of the Nurrambidge. But when the introductions were over, I confess that I never experienced such real pleasure as then fell to my lot. No annoying, strained affectation on the part of the young ladies—all was perfect ease and magnetism. That they were handsome may be considered a settled fact. Elizabeth Germain, the elder, was a blonde, aged eighteen. Amy, two years younger, was also a blonde. Three years previous to this time their mother had died. Their father had left them in care of his widowed sister, and fled to the Pacific coast to allay his grief in wandering on that, or this, wild, romantic shore. I will be brief about our love making and only say that before the end of the holidays, Bob was engaged to Elizabeth, and I to Amy.

To make the matter of our choice a little plainer, I will say that I had been accustomed to leaving all matters that required planning, to Bob, I faithfully agreeing, so unlimited was my confidence in his sagacity. This will appear in a more significant light when I assure