

THE POSTPONED.

By GELTRUDE SMITH.

[Copyright, 1907, by the Author.]
It had been snowing for two days, and now the snowflakes were out, and the first really good sleighing of the winter would begin.

The great fields lay in unbroken whiteness. The woods along the banks of the Iowa river were billows of snow. The large farmhouses and the number and size of the barns and other outlying buildings gave evidence of the richness of the soil that lay buried and resting for another harvest.

Judge Hilton's house had the distinction of being built of brick. There was a dignity in the solidity of the actual white frame houses on the surrounding farms that well became the dignity of the judge.

The judge was a New England born and bred. There was a veneration for Puritan ancestry in the entirely western soil, that, from time and tide, clings to for good old English blood.

Isabel Hilton was her father's housekeeper and only child. The mother had died while she was a baby, and she had ruled the house and been ruled by her father since that time.

She had all her father's reserve and pride of family, and at the same time his happy nature and gracious manner that won her friends when she desired to make friends. Those who found it impossible to win their way into her favor called this reserve in Isabel her "down east airs." There was a discouraging belief among the young men in the country around, some of whose fathers owned farms and herds of cattle large enough to divide and establish them in suitable legacies, that if the judge thought any of them worthy to win his daughter's love there would never be an opportunity to gain the consent of the young lady.

The judge had theories against Isabel's entertaining young gentlemen, and would not permit her to go with any escort but himself.

The privilege of spending the evening with Isabel in the protecting presence of her father was considered a mark of distinction and held the one so honored on the verge of hope.

"If a fellow had the backbone to outstep the judge some night, he might propose to the daughter," was the comment Mr. Holderman made to his son one day. Clint Holderman had been one of Isabel's most persistent admirers.

"The trouble of all of you is you go there shaking in your boots and talk to the judge and come away with the big head because you dared to do it, but I tell you if I was a young fellow I'd outstep him if I had the time of day. It's some such pluck as that the judge is looking for. He raised her, and he knows her value, and she ain't going cheap to none of you. If you can get in ahead of the other fellows and tow her in, I'll give you \$10,000 and deed you a section of land. Come, now, let's see what you're made of."

In some way this loudly promise set adrift the current of country gossip and roused the admirers of Isabel, one and all, to new interest in the contest. Large stories were told of the late hours the judge kept that winter with Isabel's suitors.

Clint Holderman drove over to the brick house early on the evening that he had set his mind, with flintlike determination, to give his father's advice the trial.

It was a cold night, and as he stepped along in his new cutter, drawn by a handsome span of black horses, and well tucked in with buffalo robes, his heart was warm with hope.

He had spent many evenings of the winter playing chess with the judge, so he was sure of his welcome, but tonight he looked beyond all this. He thought of the hour when at last, with his heart and understanding touched, the judge would bid them good night, and he should be left alone with Isabel.

There was no handsomer young man in the country than Clint Holderman, none who danced better or who drove better horses, but more than all this the judge had repeatedly told him that he had never known a man who played a better hand at chess.

This was an encouragement indeed, for if the judge had a weakness it was for chess, and he would be decidedly pleasant to have a son-in-law who could play the trial.

Clint felt his heart beating wildly. The moment of triumph was at hand. The judge crossed to the bay window at the other end of the room. Isabel's eyes followed him nervously.

From one side among the geraniums and ivy he drew the chess table and pushed it before him toward the fire.

"I think it would be pleasant for us to have a game of chess," he said affably.

Clint sprang to his feet. "Oh, thank you, sir, but I think I must be going home."

"Oh, must you? Well, come over again and we'll get at it earlier in the evening."

It seemed hours before Clint finally found himself out on the smooth snow beaten road spinning along toward home.

He would have been completely wretched in his defeat if it had not been for that look in Isabel's eyes when she handed him the chess board. He could endure his father's ridicule and wait his time, remembering that look.

And so he made a good story of it at breakfast the next morning and added, elevating his voice above the roaring laugh of his father and the shrieks of his mother and sister:

"Never you mind. The judge isn't through with me yet. I've only first of the house I was out of shot, but I haven't given up the fight yet."

"Oh, you'll let some other bantam rooster carry her off, I guess. I'm safe enough on the cash and land I promised you," his father answered, with a provoking laugh.

"Don't you count on it," Clint said, springing up from the table with fire in his eyes. "I'm not downed yet, I tell you."

"All right, sonny. We'll give a big dance to celebrate your engagement and an oyster supper. I suppose there's no rush about ordering the oysters?"

"I'll hold you to that," Clint said, bringing his fist up against the door. "If the thing's settled by Saturday week, we'll have the dance. If it isn't settled, it won't be. I'm going over town after the mail."

He turned and went out of the room. As the door closed he heard his sister say, "tittering."

"Clint has about as hard a time courting Isabel as you had courting mother."

This was a warm thought of comfort to him. At least Isabel had never denied him her love, and he knew that his mother had been hardly won.

"Ostom."

The young man sat awkwardly in his chair and was silent.

They seemed to be closing the doors against any thought he might have of closer intimacy with the family.

The judge left the room for a moment and came back with a lighted lamp and placed it on the claw legged table in the center of the room. He had put on a long dressing gown, faced with crimson quilted silk, and now he drew his great chair up before the fire and stretched himself out in it.

"Come, Mr. Holderman, I will let you shake the popper for me, and I'll go down cellar and get some apples," Isabel looked up at him with a merry twinkle in her eyes as he held the handle toward him and then ran out of the room.

Clint grasped the handle of the popper with the delight of success flooding his veins. Isabel had never before given him a reason to believe that she cared for him that could compare with that look.

Daylight would find him sitting right there, but he would beat the judge's watch and gain the opportunity of speaking to her. It was a delightful evening. The judge partook of the popcorn and the conversation was more than usually affable and entertaining.

Isabel sat on the opposite side of the fireplace and crocheted on a blue wool scarf. There were pink spots burning her cheeks, and her eyes were very moist. The time passed on until the popper clock on the mantel clearly and forcibly announced the hour of 10.

It had been comparatively easy this far, but now was the time when Clint usually went home.

The cold contest was about to begin. The judge shoved his chair back to the table, picked up a paper and began to read.

From time to time he glanced over the top of his paper at the two talking before the fire, but still read on.

When the clock struck 11, he threw the paper down, pulled his chair back to the fire and drew the young man into an animated political discussion.

Isabel stirred about the room, correctly putting things in order for the night. It was nearing midnight. For the last 15 minutes the conversation had begun to lag.

There were cold minutes of complete silence.

"Had you noticed that I had traded horses?" Clint asked in an impatient pause.

"No, have you?" Isabel asked, coming forward, with interest.

"Yes, I've traded the grays for George Merwin's blacks. Of course there was considerable to boot. They go like the wind in my new cutter."

"I should think they would," Isabel drew a deep breath. "I do like black horses. I never cared for gray ones. I always think of having to look for a red-headed girl," she laughed.

"I should think you'd always be on the outlook for one when you ride behind them."

"Perhaps Mr. Holderman is looking for a red-headed girl," the judge said, with a queer look in the direction of the young man. "There's a superstition that a red-headed girl has a violent temper. Now, this Mrs. W. has told me, after a moment's silence, in which his thought seemed to have been far away, 'Isabel's mother had as sweet a disposition as any woman that ever lived, and her hair was the color of that deep flame there.'"

Isabel was leaning on the back of her father's chair. "Why, father, you've always said my hair was almost the color of mother's. I'm sure no one would ever think of calling mine red."

"I don't know about that," the judge laughed, "and I don't know about the temper either," he added, reaching up and pinching her cheek.

"I never liked red hair, but I'm sure I don't believe in that sign," Clint said. He gazed fixedly into the fire and felt as though he were turning to stone.

The clock struck 12 with a resonant, defiant stroke, as though it understood the contest in which it held the stakes, and refused to commit itself as to whose side would win.

At a quarter past 12 the judge stood up.

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He saw that his horses were running away.

There had been no alarm in Isabel's face, though she was holding the reins with all her strength, and had looked neither to the right nor the left as she passed him. If there was one thing more than another that the Holdermans prized themselves in, it was their knowledge of a good horse and splendid horsemanship.

Isabel Hilton's love of horses and her daring in driving them had been one of the first things that had won Clint's admiration. Her control and courage now appealed to him tremendously. His own horses seemed to have felt the spirit of the runaway pair ahead, as they flew along over the snow after them.

Clint knew that at any moment Isabel's slight arms might lose the power to hold those tense reins so securely, and the horses dash to one side and the crash come, and there was nothing he could do. On went the cutter ahead of him, swaying to the left and the right, but still keeping the road. The bridge across the Iowa river was just ahead. Clint thought of the bridge with terror. If the cutter swayed to one side, as it was doing now, the crash would come on entering.

He saw Isabel's strength tightening on the reins and knew that she felt the danger.

Her horses flew up, the slight incline to the bridge, and Clint braced his nerves to withstand the shock. But to his amazement he saw that the horses were slowing up and entering the bridge with all the respect of well trained horses, and by the time they were over the frozen current below they were walking as quietly as though they had decided on that point as the end of their excitement.

Clint entered the bridge as Isabel was leaving it. She drove out to one side of the road and waited for him to come up to her. "I'll let you go on ahead of me now if you want to," she called out as he stopped.

"Look here," Clint called back, "did you think of those horses stopping at the bridge that way, I'd like to know."

"Yes, didn't you? I knew they might not, but I thought they would if I could keep them in the road. Didn't you think of them doing it?"

"Well, no, I had something else to think about," Clint said at her admiringly.

Isabel's face flushed, but she looked at him smiling.

"I wasn't afraid as long as the road was clear, but I should have lost all courage if I had seen a team coming."

"Talk of pluck," Clint said, driving a little nearer to her cutter. "Isabel, what did you think of last night? What did you think of me anyway?"

She drove out into the road ahead of him, and then looked back over her shoulder, laughing. "I thought if I had only waited half an hour longer I would have been 18. It is my birthday today." And with that she touched her ponies with the whip and kept well ahead of him all the way to the village.

When they met again, it was before the fire in the sitting room at the brick house, where they had held the hours the night before. But the contest with the judge had lost its seriousness.

Between them he sat, imperturbable, as he had sat the night before, but tonight he was only an amusing barrier and not a serious obstruction. Love had leaped the bounds and was free. It triumphed in their eyes as they looked across him and over him, smiling knowingly at each other.

"We're going to have a dance over at our house Saturday week, and an oyster supper. It is going to be a celebration of a great event in our family," Clint announced with a meaning gesture to Isabel.

"What's the event you're celebrating?" the judge asked, looking over his spectacles.

"Well, that's something of a secret until tomorrow. I hope I can tell you then. You must be sure and come. We're going to have a great time."

The judge looked at Isabel. "Do you think we can go, my dear?"

Her cheeks were rosy. "Why, yes; I should think we could, father."

"Thank you, then. We'll come," the judge said, leaning back in his chair and looking at the ceiling. "And now would you like to play that game of chess we didn't have last night?"

It was evident he had no intention of giving up the field. Clint did not answer.

China adjoining Mongolia there are thousands of farms devoted exclusively to dog raising. At each of these establishments several hundred dogs are kept, which are killed by strangulation when they are 8 months old usually toward the middle of winter. At this time their skin is covered with very fine hair, and from these skins are made winter clothes for the inhabitants of the Celestial empire. The dogs furnishing these skins are entirely different from the breed of dogs known here or in Europe, and their fur is said to be so long haired and close on account of the extreme cold of that region. These fur dogs constitute the only wealth of this desolate region, and the only thing given to the daughters of these farmers consists of a number of dogs. The value of a dog is about 50 cents, and as it takes eight fur dogs to make a coat, such an article is rather expensive. Traffic in dogskins is centered in large cities like Mookien and Fookien, where they are tanned. At the first named place the amount of dogskins handled last year represented \$500,000.—London Times.

Watts the Painter.

George Frederick Watts is, among all our living masters of painting, the only absolutely self-taught one. Early in his life—he was born in 1815—having an especial bent toward the plastic art, he entered the studio of William Behnes, the celebrated but unfortunate sculptor. Here he watched, but was never taught, as has been erroneously stated more than once. He visited no painter's studio or atelier, but taught himself everything.—London Standard.

Disparity.

"Miss Welland refused an offer of marriage from a rich man last week! That beats me. She can't afford to wait much longer. She's 49 if she's a day."

"I know it," she was told once, though, to tell the man who wanted to marry her that she feared the disparity between their ages was too great."

"That's still more astonishing. How old was he?"

"Eighty-seven,"—Chicago Tribune.

Not a Nice Place for Sleeping.

"One evening my officer said to me, 'I think I'll sleep here tonight, Wicken, down by this gun.' I answered, 'Very good, sir, and scaped a hole in the sand, and I'll be blanket in it. As a rule we could always sleep directly we lay down, but in a few moments he said, 'I can't sleep here, Wicken.' 'Can't you, sir?' I asked. 'What's wrong, sir?' 'Why, there's such an abominable smell just here!'

"Oh, that comes from over the hill yonder, sir, where there are a few dead horses," I replied. However, I scaped a hole for him somewhere else, and while I was moving the blanket, I discovered the body of a black buried just below the surface, which my master had exposed by twisting and turning about in his restlessness. I gave me a bit of a shock, but I called out to one of my comrades to come and look, and we had a good laugh about it."—Told From the Banks.

It is announced that the Portland Tribune has been purchased by a company of gentlemen who will hereafter publish it as a republican organ. The cause of free silver will not be supported by that paper hereafter. The republican party has long needed an organ in Multnomah county. The new management took hold of the paper yesterday and an improvement is noted.

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March 8, 1897.

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INDEPENDENT

HILLSBORO, OREGON.

An exceedingly interesting ten minutes was spent by Mr. Barnett last Friday, Mr. Barnett was ploughing in a field south of town on that day, when along came W. C. Belknap's hounds in tow of a coyote. The animal was very nearly tired out, Barnett stopped his team and lit out after the varmint. The distance to the creek was only a matter of a few hundred yards, and the recent rains had caused the water to rise so that the lower lands were covered. At the point where the wolf reached the water a log lay, and on this he took refuge. This same log lay near a tree which looked just above the water, and as the hounds came on the log the wolf swung himself up into the forks of the tree, and when Barnett came up, the dogs sat on the log, one on each side of tree while the coyote sat up in the tree and rested his carcass. Wading waist deep in the water, the erstwhile farmer grabbed mister sheepkiller by the tail and tried to knock out his brains with a lead pencil. In fact, the excitement of the moment caused him to forget that he ever owned a pocket knife, and the effort he made in his endeavor to drown the animal were very, very funny, indeed. You should get him to tell it if you want to laugh and grow fat. The coyote was killed. What wouldn't die with so much trouble on his mind.—Gazette.

J. R. Douglas of Albany, took the first prize and J. Beck of Newberg, the third offered by an eastern seed firm for the best onions raised in the United States or Canada. Thus Oregon won two prizes against the whole of North America and Linn county won the first. Mr. Douglas has taken in 17,725 during the past year \$135.50 on his garden product.

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