

thinking what a chance he had missed, for Elsie Winton was a fine cook and could make two pounds of butter where nobody else could make more than one pound and a pint of butter-milk. But it's about Molly Bowen I meant to be telling you—her that had the affair with Ed Green.

"As I was saying, Molly drove the cart, and pretty soon folks began to notice that she wasn't as punctual as usual. And as for Ed, whenever the boarders howled for him to make a kick about the victuals, he wasn't anywheres in sight. The fact is, he had got into the habit of strolling out into the country about the time when Molly and the cart were due, and Molly, being only twenty-four, had a soft spot in her heart which wasn't proof against the rules and regulations of the society.

"I don't know how Elsie Winton heard about it, but she went right up in the air. Elsie was forty-three, and her hopes had soured from being kept too long. So there was a terrible rumpus up at the institution, and they talked of expelling Molly; but finally it simmered down and Elsie drove the cart herself after that.

"Now you can't fight against human nature, as you may have observed, and pretty soon folks began to understand what was happening. Elsie Winton started on her rounds at seven in the morning, as regular as clockwork, and she didn't get back before ten. And about a week after she had begun to drive the cart we began to notice that all the young fellows in the village had got the early rising habit. Ed Green, in particular, who never used to wake up until he smelled the bacon frying, got up as regular as the sun and started taking a country walk before breakfast. Jim Rogers, who had been beauling Winnie Constance before she joined the society, got interested in birds, and said that the early morning was the best time to observe them. Jennie White's beau, Ike Shoemaker, who had always been a good-for-nothing

sort of fellow, started composing poetry, and he said he had to be up to salute the sun.

"However, the folks around here, who, as you may have observed, are snoopy, couldn't help noticing that they all used to take the road past here that leads up toward the institution. And we guessed that some day or other Elsie Winton would come home unexpected and raise Cain. She is a powerful woman with her tongue, as you may have noticed.

"We got so interested that nobody thought very much about anything else. Bill Wise, who farms on the ridge, told us he used to see the young fellows gossiping with the girls over the fence that had been put up. It wasn't much of a fence, being composed of arbor vitae, which takes more than six weeks to amount to anything. And I guess the boys weren't slow.

"Well, to get on, at last the flare-up came, and in just the way we had looked for. Elsie Winton came back one morning at half-past nine, and there were Ike and Ed and Jim hobnobbing with Winnie and Jenny and Molly over the arbor vitae. And two or three more of the young fellows with the girls, too.

"And Molly, being a woman, saw that it was best to get her tongue in first.

"'We're done with your old society, Miss Winton,' she said. 'Ed and I are going to be married on the first of the month.'

"'And Jim and I on the fifteenth,' put in Winnie Custance, glaring at Elsie Winton.

"'And Ike and I are going to be engaged as soon as he makes some money out of his poetry,' continued Jenny White.

"Just then Zeke Smith's cart came up the lane, and Elsie Winton called to Zeke. 'Come here,' she said.

"Zeke came lumbering along with a grin.

"'Repeat to me what you have just told me,' said Elsie to Zeke.