

Quincy Adams Sawyer

BY CHAS. F. PLIGIN.

A New England Story Dedicated to the Memory of James Russell Lowell.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

The Surprise Party.

After Alice had taken her place on the back seat in the double sleigh, Quincy started to take his place on the front seat, beside Zekiel, but the latter motioned him to sit beside Alice, and Quincy did so without needing any urging.

As Zekiel took up the reins, Quincy leaned forward and touched him on the shoulder.

"I've just thought," said he, "that I've made a big blunder and I can't see how I can repair it."

"What's the matter?" asked Zekiel; and Alice turned an inquiring face towards Quincy.

"The fact is," Quincy continued, "I ordered some ice cream and cake sent down from the city for the show to night, but I forgot, I am ashamed to say, to make arrangements to have it sent up to Deacon Mason's. It will be directed to him, but the station agent won't be likely to send it up before tomorrow."

"What time is it?" asked Zekiel. Quincy looked at his watch and replied, "It is just half-past four."

"Why do we go so early?" inquired Alice, "they will not have tea till six."

"Oh," said Zekiel, "I intended to give you a sleigh ride first anyway. Now with this pair of trotters I am going to take you over to Eastborough Centre and have you back at Deacon Mason's barn door in just one hour and with appetites that it will take two coppers to satisfy."

With this Zekiel whipped up his horses and they dashed off towards the town. A short distance beyond Uncle Ike's chicken coop they met Abner Stiles driving home from the Centre. He nodded to Zekiel, but Quincy did not notice him, being engaged in conversation with Alice at the time. They reached the station, and Quincy gave orders to have the material sent up, so that it would arrive at about 9:30.

"Zekiel more than kept his promise, for they reached Deacon Mason's barn at exactly 8:29. Hiram was on hand to put up the horses, and told Quincy in a whisper that some of the boys thought it was mighty mean not to invite the Pettengill folks and their boarder.

The sharp air had whetted the appetites of the travellers during their six-mile ride, and they did full justice to the nicely-cooked food that the deacon's wife placed before them. Supper was over before 7:15, and in half an hour the dishes were washed and put away and the quartet of young folks adjourned to the parlor.

Quincy took his seat at the piano and began playing a popular air.

"Oh, let us sing something," cried Huldly. "You know I have been taking lessons from Professor Strout, and he says I have improved greatly. If he says it you know it must be so; and, did you know, Alice, that Zekiel has a fine baritone voice?"

"We used to sing a good deal together," said Alice, "but I was no judge of voices then."

"Well, Zekie don't know a note of music," continued Huldly, "but he has a quick ear and no seems to know naturally just how to use his voice."

"Oh, nonsense," said Zekiel, "I don't know how to sing. I only hum a little. Sing us something, Mr. Sawyer," said he.

Quincy sang a song very popular at the time, entitled "The Jockey Hat and Feather." All four joined in the chorus, and at the close the room rang with laughter. Quincy then struck up another popular air, "Pop Goes the Weasel," and this was sung by the four with great gusto. Then he looked over the music on the top of the piano, which was a Bourne & Leavitt square, and found a copy of the cantata entitled, "The Haymakers," and for half an hour the solos and choruses rang through the house and out upon the evening air.

Mrs. Mason looked in the door and said, "I wouldn't sing any more now, it is nearly 8 o'clock."

And thus admonished they began talking of Tilly James' engagement to Sam Hill and the sale of the grocery store, which was to come off the next day.

"I wonder who will buy it?" asked Huldly.

"Well, I hear Strout has got some backers," said Zekiel, "but I don't see what good it will be to him unless he is appointed postmaster. They say he has written to Washington and applied for the position."

Quincy pricked up his ears at this. He had almost forgotten this chance to put another spoke in Mr. Strout's wheel. He made a mental memorandum to send telegrams to two Massachusetts congressmen with whom he was well acquainted to hold up Strout's appointment at all hazards until they heard from him again.

A little after 7 o'clock the advance guard of the surprise party arrived at Hill's grocery, which was the appointed rendezvous. Abner Stiles drew Strout to one side and said, "I saw the Pettengill folks and that city feller in Zeke's double sleigh going over to the Centre at about 5 o'clock."

"So much the better," said Strout. "Do you know where they're going?" inquired Stiles.

"No, but I guess I can find out," Strout replied.

He had spied Mandy Skinner among a crowd of girls on the platform. He called her and she came to him.

"Did Mr. Pettengill and his sister take tea at home tonight?"

"No," said Mandy. "I told them it was going away tonight, and Mr. Pettengill said they were going away too. And Cobb's twins told me at dinner time that they wouldn't be at home to supper; and as I didn't wish to eat too much, considering what was coming later, I didn't get no supper at all. I left Crowley to look out for Uncle Ike,

who is always satisfied if he gets toast and tea."

"Don't you know where they've gone?" remarked Strout.

"Over to the hotel, I guess," said Mandy. "I heard Mr. Sawyer tell Miss Alice that they had good oysters over there, and she said as how she was dying to get some raw oysters."

"Things couldn't have worked better," remarked Strout, as he rejoined Abner, who was smoking a cheap cigar. "The Pettengill crowd has gone over to the hotel to supper. You ought not to smoke, Abner, if you are going to kiss the girls tonight," said Strout.

"I guess I shan't do much kissing," replied Abner, "except what I give my fiddle with the bow, and that fiddle of mine is used to smoke."

Strout looked around and saw that the whole party had assembled. There were about fifty in all, very nearly equally divided as regarded numbers into fellows and girls.

"Now I am going to read," said Strout, "to interview the old lady, before we jump in on them. The rest of you just follow Abner and wait at the top of the hill, just round the corner, so that they can't see you from the house. I have arranged with Hiram to blow his bugle when everything is ready, and when you hear it you just rush up the hill, laughing and screaming and yelling like wild Indians. Come in the back door, right into the big kitchen, and when Miss Huldly comes into the room you just wait till I deliver my speech."

Strout started off, and the party followed Abner to the appointed waiting place.

Strout knocked lightly at the kitchen door, and it was opened by Mrs. Mason.

"Is the deacon at home?" inquired he, endeavoring to disguise his voice.

"No," said Mrs. Mason, "he has gone to Eastborough Centre on some business, but I told me he would be back about 9:30."

"Is Hiram here?" asked Strout.

"He's out in the kitchen polishing up his bugle," said Mrs. Mason. "But come in a minute, Mr. Strout, I have got something to tell you."

Strout stepped in and quietly closed the door.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Mason? I hope Huldly isn't sick."

"No," said she, "it's unfortunate it has happened as it has, but it couldn't be avoided. You see she invited some company to tea, and I supposed that they would have come home long fore this. You see, Huldly don't suspect anything, and she has asked them to spend the night, and I don't see how in the world I am going to get rid of them."

"Don't do it," said Strout. "Extend to them an invitation in my name to remain and enjoy the evening's festivities with us. No doubt Miss Huldly will be pleased to have them stay."

"I know she will," said Mrs. Mason, "and I'll give them your invite as soon as you're ready."

"Well, Mrs. Mason," said Strout, "just tell Hiram I am ready to have him blow that bugle, and when you hear it you can just tell your daughter and her friends what's up."

Hiram soon looked Strout outside the kitchen door. The latter went out in the road and looked up the hill to see if his party was all ready. Abner waved his hand, and Strout rushed back to Hiram and cried, "Give it to 'em now, Hiram, and do your darnedest!"

Huldly and her friends were engaged in a friendly conversation, when a loud blast burst upon the air, followed by a succession of piercing notes from Hiram's old cracked bugle.

Huldly jumped to her feet and exclaimed, "What does Hiram want to blow that horrid old bugle at this time of night for? I will tell ma to stop him."

She started towards the parlor door, when the whole party heard shouts of laughter, screams from female voices, yells from male ones that would have done credit to a band of wild Comanches.

All stood still and listened. Again the laughter, screams, and yells were heard. This time they seemed right under the parlor window.

A look of surprise and almost terror passed over Alice's face, and turning to Quincy unthinkingly she said in a low whisper, "What was that, Quincy? What does it mean?"

Quincy's heart jumped as his Christian name fell from the girl's lips. He put his left hand over his heart (he picture was in the pocket beneath it) and said as naturally as he could, although with a little tremor in his voice, "It's all right, Alice, that's Mr. Strout's idea of a surprise party."

"A surprise party!" cried Huldly, "who for? Me?"

At this moment Mrs. Mason opened the door and entered the room.

"Huldly," said she, "Professor Strout wishes me to tell you that he and his friends have come to give you a surprise party, and he wished me to invite you," turning to the others, "as Huldly's friends to remain and enjoy the festivities of the evening."

Then the poor old lady, who had been under a nervous strain for the past ten days, and who had come nearer telling untruths than she ever had before in her life, began to laugh, and then to cry, and finally sank into a chair, overcome for the moment.

"I wish Abraham was here," said she, "I guess I'm getting a little bit nervous."

Then she returned to the great kitchen, which the members of the surprise party now had in their possession. A dozen of the men produced lanterns, which they lighted, and which were hung upon the walls of the kitchen, one of the number having brought a hammer and some nails.

It was a pound party, and two young

men fetched in a basket containing the goodies which had been brought for the supper. Strout had made arrangements to have the hot coffee made at the grocery store, and it was to be brought down at 9:30.

He arranged his party so that all could get a good view of the door through which Huldly must come. He stepped forward within ten feet of the door and stood expectantly. Why this delay? Strout looked around at the party. There were Tilly James and Sam Hill; Cobb's twins, and each brought a pretty girl; Robert Wood, Benjamin Bates, and Arthur Seetes were equally well supplied. Lindy Putnam, after much solicitation, had Howe, the clergyman's son, and he was in the seventh heaven of delight; Mandy stood beside Hiram and his bugle, and Samantha Green had Farmer Tompkins' son George for escort. It was a real old-fashioned, democratic party. Clergyman's sons, farmers' sons, girls that worked out, chore boys farm hands, and an heiress to \$100,000, met on a plane of perfect equality without a thought of caste, and to these were soon to be added more farmers' sons and daughters and the only one of a millionaire.

"Let give them a call," said Strout, "to Hiram, and the latter gave a st on his bugle, which sent fingers to the ears of his listeners. The handle of the door turned and opened and Huldly entered, her mother leaning upon her arm.

They were greeted by hand clapping and cries of "Good evening" from the party, and all eyes were fixed upon Strout, who stood amid the throng and gazed at the three figures that came through the open door and stood behind Huldly and her mother. Hamlet following the feeble apparition on the battlements of the castle at Elsinore, Macbeth viewing Banquo at his feast, or Richard the Third gazing on the freshly paraded and armed kings and princes; could not have felt weaker at heart than did Professor Strout when he saw the new-comers and realized that they were there by his express invitation.

The members of the surprise party thought Strout had forgotten his speech, and cries of "Speech!" "Speech!" "Give us the speech!" fell upon his ear, but no words fell from his lips. It was a cruel blow, but no crueler than the unfounded stories that he had started and circulated about the town for the past three months. Those who had thought it was mean not to invite the Pettengills and Mr. Sawyer enjoyed his discomfiture and were the loudest in calling for a speech.

The situation became somewhat strained, and Huldly looked up to Quincy with an expression that seemed to say, "How are we going to get out of this?"

Quite a number of the party saw this look and began calling out, "Mr. Sawyer, give us a speech!" "A speech from Mr. Sawyer!"

Huldly smiled and nodded to Quincy, and then there were loud cries of "Speech!" "Speech!" and clapping of hands.

Abner Stiles got up and gave his chair to Professor Strout, who sank into it, saying, as he did so, "I guess it's all right, but I don't see how I can get out of this."

Quincy stepped forward and bowing to Huldly and then to Mrs. Mason, addressed the party in a low but clearly distinct voice.

"Authorized by these ladies to speak for them, I desire to return sincere thanks for this manifestation of your regard for them. Your visit was entirely unexpected by Miss Mason and a great surprise to her. But it is a most pleasant surprise, and she desires me to thank you again and again for your kind thoughts and your good company this evening. She and her mother join in giving you a most hearty welcome. They wish you to make yourself at home and will do all in their power to make the evening a happy one and one long to be remembered by the inhabitants of Mason's Corner. The inception of this happy event, I learn, is due to Professor Strout, who for some time, I understand, has been Miss Mason's music teacher, and the ladies, whose ideas I am expressing, desire me to call upon him to take charge of the festivities and bring them to a successful close, as he is no doubt competent and willing to do."

Quincy bowed low and retired behind the other members of the party. Quincy's speech was greeted with cheers and more clapping of hands. Even Strout's friends were pleased by the graceful compliments paid to the Professor, and joined in the applause. Strout had by this time fully recovered his equanimity. A chair was placed upon the kitchen table and Abner Stiles was boosted up and took his seat thereon. While he was tuning up his fiddle the Professor opened the packages that one of the girls had handed to him and passed a pair of knitted woolen wristers to each lady in the company. He gave three pairs to Huldly, who in turn gave one pair to her mother and one to Alice. There were several pairs over, as several girls who had been expected to join the party had not come.

"Now, Mrs. Mason," said the Professor, "could you kindly supply me with a couple of small baskets, or if not, with a couple of milk pans?"

The Professor took one of the pans and Robert Wood the other.

"The ladies will please form in line," cried the Professor, which was done. "Now will each lady," said the Professor, "as she marches between us, throw one wrist in one pan and 'other wrist in the other pan? Give us a good, lively march, Abner," he added, and the music began.

The procession passed between the upheld pans, one wrist of each pair thrown right and the other left, as it

The music started up again and the procession moved forward and the work of selection was completed.

Again the music stopped. "Now will the gentlemen form in line, and as they march forward each one take a wrist from the pan that I hold," said the Professor.

Once more the music started up. The line was formed, the procession advanced, Zekiel and Quincy bringing up the rear. As Quincy took the last wrist from the pan that the Professor held, the latter turned quickly away and beat a tattoo on the bottom of the pan with his knuckles and cried out, "Gentlemen will please find their

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partners. The wristers become the property of the gentlemen.

Then a wild rush took place. Screams of laughter were heard on every side, and it was fully five minutes before the excitement subsided, and in response to another tattoo upon the milk pan by the Professor, the couples, as arranged by the hand of Fate, formed in line and marched around the great kitchen to the music of a sprightly march written by the Professor and called "The Wristers March," and respectfully dedicated to Miss Huldly Mason. This announcement was made by Mr. Stiles from his elevated position upon the kitchen table.

The hand of Fate had acted somewhat strangely. The Professor and Mandy Skinner stood side by side, as did Zekiel Pettengill and Mrs. Mason. Lindy Putnam and Huldly by a queer twist of fortune were mated with Cobb's twins.

But Fate did one good act. By chance Quincy and Alice stood side by side. She looked up at him and said to her partner, "What is your name, I cannot see your face."

"My name is Quincy," said Sawyer in a low voice.

"I am so glad!" said Alice, leaning a little more heavily on his arm.

"So am I," responded Quincy ardently.

After the procession had made several circuits of the great kitchen, Professor Strout gave a signal, and it broke up, each gentleman being then at liberty to seek the lady of his own choice.

"What games shall we play first?" asked Strout, taking the centre of the room, and looking round upon the company with a countenance full of smiles and good nature.

"Who is it?" "Who is it?" came from a dozen voices.

"All right," cried Strout; "that's a very easy game to play. Now all you ladies get in a line and I'll put this one chair right front of yer. Now all the gentlemen must leave the room except one. I suppose we can use the parlor for a while."

Mrs. Mason nodded her head in the affirmative.

"I'll tend door," said Hiram; and he took his position accordingly. After the rest of the gentlemen had left the room, Hiram closed the door, and turning to Huldly said, "Shall I call them, or will you?"

"You call them," said Huldly.

"Got the handkerchief ready?" asked Hiram.

Huldly swung a big red bandanna in the air. Opening a door Hiram called out in a loud voice, "Obadiah Strout."

As Strout walked towards the line of young girls they called out together, "Mister, please take a chair."

Strout sat down in a chair. One of the girls who had the bandanna handkerchief in her hand passed it quickly over his eyes and tied it firmly behind his head. Two of the girls then stepped forward and each one taking one of his hands and extending it at right angles with his body held it firmly in their grasp. At the same instant his head was pulled back by one of the girls and a kiss was imprinted on his upturned mouth.

"Who is it?" screamed the girls in unison. The holds on the Professor's head and hands were released and he sat upright in the chair.

"I kinder guess it was Miss Huldly Mason," said he.

A loud laugh burst from the girls, mixed with cries of "You're wrong!" "You ain't right!" "You didn't get it!" "You're out!" and similar ejaculations.

The handkerchief was taken from his eyes and he was marched to the left of the line of girls, which ran lengthwise of the kitchen.

Abner Stiles was the next one called in, and he was subjected to the same treatment as had befallen his predecessor, but to the intense disgust

of Professor Strout he saw Hiram Maxwell come on tiptoe from the parlor door, lean over and kiss Abner Stiles. The thought of course ran through his mind that he had been subjected to the same treatment. He was on the point of protesting at this way of conducting the game when the idea occurred to him that it would be a huge satisfaction to have that city chap subjected to the same treatment, and he decided to hold his peace.

The next one called was Zekiel Pettengill, and he was treated in the same manner as the Professor and Abner had been; but as Hiram leaned over to kiss him, Zekiel's foot slipped upon the floor and struck against Hiram's, Hiram being in front of him. Zekiel then put up both of his feet and kicked with them in such a way that Hiram was unable to approach him.

Zekiel called out, "It's Hiram Maxwell," and the room rang with the laughs and cries of the girls.

Zekiel having guessed who it was, was marched off to the right of the line of girls.

Strout called out, "Let's play something else," but the sentiment of the company seemed to be that it wasn't fair to the others not to give them a chance so the game continued. Quincy was the next one called, and to still further increase the disgust of Strout and Abner, he was treated in the same manner as before, one of the girls stepped out from the line, at a signal from Huldly, and kissed Quincy. He guessed that it was Miss Huldly Mason, and was greeted with the same cries that Strout had heard. He took his place at the left with the latter.

Strout leaned over and whispered in Abner's ear, "That was a put-up job. I'll get even with Hiram Maxwell before I get through."

The game continued until all the men had been called in. With the exception of Emmanuel Howe, none of them were able to guess who it was. When Emmanuel took his place by the side of Zekiel he confided the fact to him that he guessed it was Miss Putnam on account of the perfume which he had noticed before he left the house with her.

After this game others followed in quick succession. There were "Pill-Whol," "Toll the Cover," "Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?" "Copenhagen," and finally "Post Office." From all of these games Alice begged to be excused. She told the Professor that she was not bashful nor diffident, but that her eyesight was so poor that she knew she would detract from the pleasure of the others if she engaged in the games. The Professor demurred at first, but said finally that her excuse was a good one. Then he turned to Abner and remarked that he supposed Mr. Sawyer would ask to be excused next 'cause his girl wasn't going to play.

But Quincy had no such intention. After leading Alice to a seat beside Mrs. Mason, he returned to the company and took part in every game, entering with spirit and vivacity into each of them. He invented some forfeits that one girl objected to the forfeit exacted of her as being all out of proportion to her offence, the matter was referred to Quincy. He said that he would remit the original forfeit and she could kiss him instead. But she objected, saying that forfeit was worse than the other one. This pleased Strout greatly, and he remarked to Abner, who kept as close to him as the tail to a kite, that there was one girl in town who wasn't afraid to speak her mind.

The game of Post Office was the most trying one to Quincy. Of his own free will he would not have called either Huldly or Lindy, but Strout and Abner and all the rest of them had letters for both of these young ladies. He was afraid that his failure to call them out might lead to remark, as he knew that Strout and Abner and Robert Wood were watching his actions closely. So, near the middle of the game, when he had been called out, he had a letter from England for Miss Lindy Putnam.

As she raised her face to his for the kiss, he remarked that he gave her, she said, "I was afraid you had not forgiven me, after all."

"Oh, yes, I have," said Quincy, and carried away by the excitement of the occasion, he caught her again in his arms and gave her another kiss, this time upon the lips.

"This is instant, Abner Stiles, who was tending door, opened it and called out, "Takes a long time to pay the postage on one letter!"

A little later Quincy was again called out, and this time he had a letter from Boston for Miss Mason. He kissed her on the cheek, as he had done with Lindy. Quincy looked up with a laugh and said, "Were you as bashful as that with Miss Putnam?"

"Yes," said Quincy, "at first, but there was do 'he postage on her letter, the same as on yours." And though Huldly tried to break away from him he caught her and kissed her upon the lips, as he had done to Lindy.

Again Abner opened the door and cried out that the mails would close in one minute, and he'd better get the stamps on that letter quick."

All such good times come to an end, and the signal for the close was the return of Deacon Mason from his visit to town. He was popular with all parties and Stroutites and Anti-Stroutites, and neutral all gathered round him and said they were having a beautiful time, and could they have a little dance after supper?"

(To be Continued Tuesday.)

PREPARES FOR DYNAMITERS.

Adams Express Co. Sends Armed Detectives on Eastern Train.

New York, Dec. 17.—Armed detectives formed a part of the crew of an express train from New York for Boston which left here this morning. The train had a cargo valued at \$1,000,000 including a large sum in gold. The armed escort was sent out because threats were received by the officials of the Adams Express Co. that unless a certain amount of money was forthcoming the train would be robbed. At New Haven four more detectives armed with rifles boarded the train.

MRS. ANGEL DEAD.

Wife of President of Michigan Succumbs to Pneumonia.

Ann Arbor, Mich., Dec. 17.—Mrs. James B. Angel, wife of the president of the University of Michigan died at the family residence here today of pneumonia after a brief illness.

Cheap One-Way and Round-Trip Tickets

Will be on sale the first and third Tuesdays December to April, inclusive, from Ottumwa, Ia., to many points in the west and southwest. The rates will be very low—only half fare plus \$2.

If you are dissatisfied with present surroundings, this is a splendid opportunity to learn what some other section of the country has in store for you. Do not take anyone's word for it, but go and see for yourself.

Free copies of our publications on Nebraska, the North Platte Valley and the Big Horn Basin will be sent on request. This company has no lands for sale, but each booklet contains the addresses of reliable real estate agents.



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Ottumwa Courier's Great World's Fair Voting Contest OFFICIAL COUPON

The Ottumwa Courier's great World's Fair Voting Contest. Eight young ladies to be sent to the World's Fair at St. Louis for one week and all their expenses paid by the Courier.

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This prize trip will be awarded to four young ladies residing within the city of Ottumwa who receive the largest number of votes and to four young ladies residing outside the city of Ottumwa who receive the largest number of votes in accordance with the published rules of the contest.

MANY ACCIDENTS

Twenty-five per cent of November Deaths were Violent

City Physician Makes Monthly Report to Board of Health—No Spread in Contagious Diseases—Grocery Bills Allowed.

Of the twenty-four deaths during the month of November, six, or twenty-five per cent, were caused by accidents. This was gleaned from the report of Dr. W. B. LaForce, physician to the board of health at the monthly meeting of that body last evening. The report shows that there were six cases of typhoid fever and four cases of scarlet fever. Dr. LaForce stated that the epidemic is exceedingly light and is not spreading. He stated that while there were four cases of scarlet fever in the city last month now there are but three and he said that there is no grounds for apprehension. Dr. LaForce said the school authorities had been investigating to see if it was necessary to close any of the schools, but he said this was entirely unnecessary.