

table and his chin in his hands, said: "Come, now, tell me all about yer Christmas story."

"Well, replied Arthur, moving so he would sit sideways to the table, comfortably crossing one leg over the knee of the other and resting one arm on the table, began: "'Twas this way, Claud. You remember the Christmas week you left home and came out here to California to dig your fortune in the gold fields; that's been just two years ago. You remember I went to Carrollton with Clarence Howe to visit his uncle's great plantation for the Holidays; and I tell you we had a grand time. We got in late; the visitors had all arrived and were at the depot in a tallyho to meet us. There were seven girls and four of us boys, to-wit: The four Misses Wayne, Ethel Marigold, Anna Wheeler and Frances Potter. The boys were Will Hampton, Jean Phillips, Clarence and myself. It is useless to say that they were all kin excepting myself. I was the stranger. Well, we had a great time, and I particularly grew to admire Miss Marigold. We were fast friends before the week ended and my visit was over. She returned to her home and I to mine. We corresponded, 'tis true, and our letters grew very warm and fervent. But let me tell you, Claud, that fellow Hampton loved her, and I am compelled to say, with broken hopes—won. Our relation was cold. Hampton only spoke to me to suppress his thorough contempt. Every time Miss Marigold and I were together and Hampton should chance to see us he would look daggers at me and smilingly would bow to her, saying, 'Miss Ethel, may I see you presently.' So passed my week at Colonel Wayne's. Well, when summer

came Miss Marigold and her cousin, one of the Misses Wayne—Louisa, by the way—came to B—— to visit their aunt, Mrs. Howe, Clarence's mother. I was in a paradise for a little over a week, when I guess that cold-hearted girl wrote my rival, Hampton, saying I was winning her affections; for she made many avowals to me. Gads! but some girls are cruel and rash. Anyhow, who should appear on the scene but that accursed Hampton, just as we were getting ready to drive over to the Springs for a day's outing; and, of course, at his arrival our trip was knocked into a cocked hat. No, she couldn't go now—Will had come. 'But really, Mr. W——, don't be disappointed. You all go and have a gay time while I stay at home with Will and show him your pretty town.' Already betrothed to him, flirting with me and pledging her constant faith forever. Oh, I know the women folks now. It was a severe lesson. It cost me my heart. I have learned to put no confidence in them."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" laughed Claud. "I knew there was another sensible man in this world. Here, pledge with me that we'll never put our trust in womankind again. You promise?"

"I—promise."

"But go on with the story; I'm much interested. Don't let me interrupt you."

"Well, as I was saying, the presence of that wretch broke up all my fun, and after a few days, and I had seen the idol of my heart fewer times, she returned to her home, accompanied by Hampton. Gads! but how my heart bled. I could almost see them starting on their wedding tour. How I suffered. How I wept bitter tears,