

MANY A SLIP "TWIXT CUP
AND LIP.
A Story of Maine.

It was a late hour of the day when a large party was gathered in the best parlor of the best house in the best village of Aroostook County, Maine. They were evidently assembled for some very pleasant celebration, to judge from the smiling and joyous countenances of everybody there; and there were a number of pretty girls in intensely white dresses, trying to look modest, and a minister in an intensely clerical suit trying to look solemn, both bringing into actual occurrence that remarkable saying, "extremes meet." If you had been there, gentle reader, and had seen the great array of white-robed maidens, and of red-faced youths, of swallow-tail coated elders, and of ponderous matrons—if you had seen the grand spread of eatables and drinkables in one room, and the dazzling blaze of tallow candles in another, you would have said, and would have been right in saying, that "this here party is a marriage party."

"Ehem!" at length exclaimed the minister, looking more solemn than ever. "Ehem!" at which singular remark all conversation ceased, and everybody looked up.

"Ehem!" said the minister more emphatically than ever. "My dear brethren, the bride is here, and the company is here—but where is the bridegroom?"

"Where, indeed?" the question seemed alternately asked by every one there. They had been waiting for some time, and the bride looked hurried.

"Jabez was to be here at 5," said Farmer Nutmeg, the sire of the rushing bride Mehetable. "Jabez was to be here at 5, to be married at 6 and it is now most a quarter to 7."

"I wonder what's happened to him?" said one.

"Somethin's come over him," whispered another.

"Whar can he be now—hope nothin's happened," said a third.

"Oh, my!" sighed the bride.

"Oh, it's all right, he'll be here in half a minute," said Deacon Nutmeg, peremptorily.

Another quarter of an hour passed—7 o'clock came, and half-past 7, and 8, but no bridegroom was on hand. Things began to look awkward.

At last, just as the clock was on the verge of striking 9, in walked the missing Jabez Dollar.

The deacon rushed up to him, grasping his hand, and asking where he'd been. The minister looked rebukingly at him; as for the bride, she angrily averted her head.

"Why, parsing," said Jabez to the minister, "I've spent the hull day a lookin' arter you."

"After me? Why, I was here at 5."

"Wal, I didn't know it. I went to your house at 9 this mornin' to speak about this here. You'd gone to Buncombe. I went to Buncombe, you'd slid off to Shickville, to a debt-or; I went to Slickville, you'd streaked away to Greenburg after potatoes; went to Greenburg, and you'd got off to Peabodystown. Whew! wan't I tired! Went chasin' you from Peabodystown, through Manawagonish, Richibucto, Chuma, Chipuncatcook, Sissiboo, Paris, and a hull grist of places, till at last I got here, tired tew death, and starved as a badger, by gum!"

The unhappy Jabez "grinned horribly a ghastly smile," and drew himself up with a heavy sigh.

"Well, come," said the deacon; "come, it's no use awaitin' now. Step up, Jabez, and be jined."

Up walked Jabez to Mehetable. The parson went up too. At this interesting stage of the proceedings all the company eagerly collected around the centre of attraction, in a closely packed circle. The parson, with a singularly sepulchral tone of voice, began. All things went on smoothly, until he reached that exciting part of the service where the ring is placed on the bride's finger. Here Jabez began to fumble in his pocket.

"The dickens," said he at length. The minister began to look as black as a thunder cloud; and the company pressed forward more eagerly.

"There was a silence still as death, And the boldest held his breath, For a time."

"Well?" said the minister, after an agonizing pause, in which the face of Jabez had assumed a color of the deepest red, so that he looked like "a perfect brick." "Well?" said the minister, "what now, Jabez Dollar?"

"What?" said Jabez.

"Where's the ring? Put it on."

"The ring—ring. I haven't any."

"What!" shouted the reverend parson.

In a fit of indignation the bride darted from the side of her adorer. All the company was in confusion.

"I forgot it!" said the forlorn youth.

"He forgot it!" screamed the mother of his beloved. "Listen to me, good people. He forgot it—aint he a pretty man? Oh you—you beauty!"

"Well!" whined the appalled young man. "I had such a hunt after the parson that I clean forgot all about the ring; and besides, I couldn't get to Bangor to-day. Can't we be married without one?"

"Be married without a ring!" The whole assemblage was horrified.

The wedding was no go. The minister departed, promising to come on the next evening. The bride went off in a dreadful state of disappointment. Jabez mounted his horse and went to his lonely home.

The next night came, and the company, which was larger now than before, saw with astonishment the same delay that there was on the previous evening. All were impatient. The deacon looked blue. The minister looked black. The bride looked green. Five o'clock passed. So did 6—and yet Jabez came not. Seven, 8, and the missing one was still "non est inventus."

"Thunderation!" cried the deacon.

"If I were Mehetable," cried the old lady, "I would see that Jabez Dollar to—"

But she was interrupted by the entrance of the unfortunate youth himself. He was covered with mud.

"Well, sir," cried the deacon, "what now. What's been keeping you so long?"

"I took the wagon," answered Jabez, "and went off for the ring. I have been travelling the whole day. I lent my own horse yesterday, and the one I borrowed was lame. Besides, the roads were wet, and you know how like the very old scratch it rained this mornin'. Didn't I get the benefit of it? Look at me."

In fact, the plasters of mud and splattering of moistened clay which covered him from head to foot showed plainly how miserable had been the roads.

"Somebody asked me if I had a license, when I got this ring," suddenly said Jabez.

"A license—why?" said the parson starting up.

"Why, because I didn't know what he meant. What is a license?"

"Hant you got one?" cried the minister, in tones of astonishment and vexation.

"Not a nary!" said Jabez, sulkily.

"Who told me that I'd orter get one. I didn't know nothin' about it. Whar was I to get one?"

The minister folded his arms and walked into the other room, humming a psalm tune.

"Well of all!" cried each lady, "I never!"

"Such a pesky mess I never see!" growled the deacon.

"It's all along of your want of gumption!" cried the fierce old lady, who already began to feel a mother-in-law's antipathy to the unfortunate Jabez Dollar. "As I said to my Mehetable if I were her—"

But Mehetable cut short her mother's discourse by bouncing out of the room. She "want goin' to be served this way—treated like a child. No, indeed, not she."

"Well, can't the weddin' go on? Aint I never goin' to be married?" cried Jabez, in piteous tones, to the deacon.

"No, not at this rate. Why 'pon airth aint you spryer?"

"I don't see how I can help it."

"Well, we'll have to help you into the noose then," said the deacon. "But you'll have to wait another day, and by the 'arnal Injines, if you aint up to the scratch, then you may translate your physiognomy to other parts, my joker."

A regular plan of operations was organized, and the bride had to retire again unmarried. In order to get Jabez into the use of his reasoning faculties, a number of "spry 'uns" blew conch shells before his window all night. The next morning they got all the conveyances in the county, and putting Jabez into the head one, which was previously adorned with flags, they posted off to Bangorum.

"If the people of that thriving town didn't know that Mr. Jabez Dollar had come in after a marriage license, then it wasn't his fault, that's all," so said several elderly ladies, whom curiosity had drawn from their houses to the door.

Jabez got his license this time, and returned to his native hamlet. For the third and the last time the com-

pany assembled. There almost occurred another postponement of the wedding on account of the ring being too small. But Jabez swore that he would kill himself if they did so, and the matter was compromised by cutting it and then pulling it on. And so Jabez was married,—*Graham's Magazine*.