

“Why, don’t you know me, Mrs. Pruett?”

“I mought ’a’ seed you before, but folks is constant a-comin’ an’ a-gwine. They pass up the road an’ down the road an’ then they pass out’n my mind.”

“Well, you have n’t forgotten me, I know; I ’m Hildreth of Hall.”

“Is that so, now?” remarked Mrs. Pruett, with just the faintest show of interest. “It ’pears to me we hyearn you was dead. What’s your will and pleasure wi’ me, Mr. Hall?”

The unconscious air with which Mrs. Pruett miscalled the young man’s name was as effectual as a blow. He lost his composure, and turned almost helplessly to his companions. If he expected sympathy he missed it. One of them laughed loudly and cried out to the others: “We ’ll have to call him Blowhard. Why, he declared by everything good and bad that he was just as chummy with these folks as their own kin. And now, right at the beginning, they don’t even know his name.”

“Where’s your husband?” inquired Hildreth of Hall. “If he don’t know me he will before the day’s over.”

“He may know you better’n I do,” said