

***NATALIE SUMNER  
LINCOLN***



***THE LOST  
DESPATCH***

**Natalie Sumner Lincoln**

# **The Lost Despatch**

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# CHAPTER I

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### THE PIGEON'S FLIGHT

It was bitterly cold that December night, 1864, and the wind sighed dismally through the Maryland woods. The moon, temporarily obscured by heavy clouds, gave some light now and then, which but served to make the succeeding darkness more intense. Suddenly the silence was broken by the clatter of galloping hoofs, and two riders, leaving the highway, rode into the woods on their left. The shorter of the two men muttered an oath as his horse stumbled over the uneven ground.

"Take care, Symonds," said his companion quickly, and he ducked his head to avoid the bare branches of a huge tree. "How near are we now to Poolesville?"

"About seven miles by the road," was the gruff reply; "but this short cut will soon bring us there. And none too soon," he added, glancing at their weary horses. "Still, Captain Lloyd, we have done a good night's work."

"I think Colonel Baker will be satisfied," agreed Lloyd.

"And friend Schmidt, now that he sees the game is up, will probably turn state's evidence."

Lloyd shook his head. "I doubt if Schmidt can tell us much. He is too leaky a vessel for a clever spy to trust with valuable information."

"But," objected Symonds, "that is a very important paper you found in his possession to-night."

"True; but that paper does not furnish us with any clue as to the identity of the spy in Washington. Schmidt is simply a go-between like many other sutlers. Probably that paper passed through three or four hands before it was given to him to carry between the lines."

"Well, there is one thing certain; Baker will make Schmidt talk if any man can," declared Symonds. "May I ask, Captain, why we are headed for Poolesville?"

"Because I am looking for the man higher up. I expect to get some trace of the spy's identity in or around Poolesville."

"You may," acknowledged the Secret Service agent doubtfully; "and again you may not. Poolesville used to be called the 'rebs' post-office,' and they do say that word of every contemplated movement of McClellan's army was sent through that village to Leesburg by the 'grape-vine telegraph.'"

"Yes, I know," was the brief reply. The two men spoke in lowered tones as they made what speed they could among the trees. "By the way, Symonds, has it ever been discovered who it was delayed the despatch from Burnside, asking for the pontoon bridges?"

"No, never a trace, worse luck; but do you know," drawing his horse closer to his companion, "I think that and the Allen disaster were accomplished by one and the same person."

"Those two and a good many others we haven't yet heard of," agreed Lloyd. "In fact, it was to trace this particular unknown that I was recalled from service at the front by Pinkerton, and detailed to join the branch of the Secret Service under Colonel Baker."

"We have either arrested or frightened away most of the informers inside the city," volunteered Symonds, after a brief silence. "Besides which, Washington is too well guarded nowadays—two years ago was a different matter. Now, the general commanding the Maryland border patrols declares that a pigeon cannot fly across the Potomac without getting shot."

Lloyd's answer was lost as Symonds' horse stumbled again, recovered himself, and after a few halting steps went dead lame. In a second Symonds had dismounted, and, drawing off his glove, felt the animal's leg.

"Strained a tendon," he growled, blowing on his numb fingers to warm them. "I'll have to lead him to the road; it is over there," pointing to a slight dip in the ground. "You go ahead, sir; it's lucky I know the country."

As the two men reached the edge of the wood and stood debating a moment, they were disturbed by the distant sound of hoof beats.

"Get over on that side of the road," whispered Lloyd, "and keep out of sight behind that tree; leave your horse here."

Symonds did as he was told none too soon. Around the bend of the road came a horseman. Quickly Lloyd's challenge rang out:

"Halt, or I fire!"

As he spoke, Lloyd swung his horse across the narrow road.

Swerving instinctively to the right, the newcomer was confronted by Symonds, who had stepped from behind the tree, revolver in hand. An easy target for both sides, the rider had no choice in the matter. Checking his frightened horse, he called:

"Are you Yanks or rebels?"

Symonds lowered his revolver. He knew that a Confederate picket would not be apt to use the word "rebels."

"We are Yanks," he answered, "and you?"

"A friend."

"Advance, friend," ordered Lloyd, "but put your right hand up. Now," as the rider approached him, "where did you come from, and where are you going?"

"From Harper's Ferry, bearing despatches to Adjutant-General Thomas in Washington from General John Stevenson, commanding this district."

"How did you come to take this cut?" demanded Symonds.

"I rode down the tow path until I reached Edward's Ferry, then cut across here, hoping to strike the turnpike. It's



freezing on the tow-path." As he spoke the trooper pulled the collar of his heavy blue overcoat up about his ears until it nearly met his cavalry hat.

The clouds were drifting away from before the moon, and a ray of light illuminated the scene. Lloyd inspected the trooper suspiciously; his story sounded all right, but...

"Your regiment?" he asked.

"The First Maryland Potomac Home Brigade, Colonel Henry A. Cole. I am attached to headquarters as special messenger."

"Let me see your despatch."

"Hold on," retorted the trooper. "First, tell me who you are."

"That's cool," broke in Symonds. "I guess you will show it to us whether you want to or not. Seems to me, young man," glancing closely at the latter's mount, "your horse is mighty fresh, considering you have ridden such a distance."

"We in the cavalry know how to keep our horses in good condition, as well as ride them." The trooper pointed derisively at Symonds' sorry nag standing with drooping head by the roadside.

"None of your lip," growled Symonds angrily; his poor riding was a sore subject. Further discussion was cut short by Lloyd's peremptory order:

"Come; I am waiting; give me the despatch," and, as the trooper still hesitated, "we are agents of the United States Secret Service."

"In that case, sir." The trooper's right hand went to the salute; then he unbuttoned his coat, and fumbled in his belt. "Here it is, sir."

As Lloyd bent forward to take the expected paper, he received instead a crashing blow on the temple from the butt end of a revolver, which sent him reeling from the saddle. At the same time, Symonds, who had hold of the trooper's bridle, was lifted off his feet by the sudden rearing of the horse, and before he had collected his wits, he was dashed violently to one side and thrown on the icy ground.

Symonds staggered to his feet, but at that instant the trooper, who was some distance away, swerved suddenly toward the woods, and his broad cavalry hat was jerked from his head by a low-hanging branch. His horse then bolted into the middle of the road, and for a second the trooper's figure was silhouetted against the sky in the brilliant moonlight. A mass of heavy hair had fallen down the rider's back.

"By God! It's a woman!" gasped Symonds, as he clutched his revolver.

A shot rang out, followed by a stifled cry; then silence, save for the galloping hoof beats growing fainter and fainter down the road in the direction of Washington.

## **CHAPTER II**

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### **BRAINS VS. BRAWN**

Up Thirteenth Street came the measured tread of marching feet, and two companies of infantry turned the corner into New York Avenue. The soldiers marched with guns reversed and colors furled. A few passers-by stopped to watch the sad procession. Suddenly they were startled by peal on peal of merry laughter, which came from a bevy of girls standing in front of Stuntz's notion store. Instantly two officers left their places by the curb and walked over to the little group.

"Your pardon, ladies," said Lloyd sternly. "Why do you laugh at a soldier's funeral?"

The young girl nearest him wheeled around, and inspected Lloyd from head to foot.

"What's that to you, Mr. Yank?" she demanded impudently.

"Nothing to me, madam; but for you, perhaps, Old Capitol Prison."

"Nonsense, Lloyd," exclaimed his companion, Major Goddard. "I am sure the young ladies meant no intentional offense."

Lloyd's lips closed in a thin line, but before he could reply a girl standing in the background stepped forward and addressed him.

"We meant no disrespect to the dead," she said, and her clear, bell-like voice instantly caught both men's attention. "In fact, we did not notice the funeral; they are, alas, of too frequent occurrence these days to attract much attention."

"Ah, indeed." Lloyd's tone betrayed his disbelief. "And may I ask what you were laughing at?"

"Certainly; at Misery."

"Misery?" Lloyd's color rose. He hated to be made ridiculous, and a titter from the listening girls roused his temper. "Is that another name for a funeral?"

"No, sir," demurely; "it is the name of my dog."

"Your dog?"

"Yes, my pet dog. You know, 'Misery loves company.'" The soft, hazel eyes lighted with a mocking smile as she looked full at the two perplexed men. "I'm 'company,'" she added softly.

In silence Lloyd studied the girl's face with growing interest, A vague, elusive likeness haunted him. Where had he heard that voice before? At that instant the glint of her red-gold hair in the winter sunshine caught his eye. His unspoken question was answered.

"Who's being arrested now?" asked a quiet voice behind Lloyd, and a man, leaning heavily on his cane, pushed his

way through the crowd that had collected about the girls. The slight, limping figure was well known in every section of Washington, and Lloyd stepped back respectfully to make room for Doctor John Boyd. It was the first time he had seen the famous surgeon at such close quarters, and he examined the grotesque old face with interest.

Doctor Boyd had lost none of the briskness of youth, despite his lameness, nor his fingers their skill, but his face was a mass of wrinkles. His keen, black eyes, bristling gray beard, predatory nose, and saturnine wit, together with his brusque manner, made strangers fear him. But their aversion was apt to change to idolatry when he became their physician.

"What, Nancy Newton, you here?" continued the surgeon, addressing the last speaker, "and Belle Cary? Have you two girls been sassing our military friends?" indicating the two officers with a wave of his hand.

"Indeed, no, Doctor John," protested Nancy; "such an idea never entered our heads. But these gentlemen don't seem to believe me."

Major Goddard stepped forward, and raised his cap.

"The young lady is mistaken, doctor," he said gravely. "We do believe her, notwithstanding," glancing quizzically at Nancy, "that we have not yet seen her dog."

"Misery!" exclaimed the surgeon, laughing. "So my four-footed friend has gotten you into hot water again, Nancy? I might have known it. Here's the rascal now."

Around the corner of Twelfth Street, with an air of conscious virtue, trotted the cause of all the trouble—a handsome, red-brown field spaniel. Robert Goddard, a lover of dogs, snapped his fingers and whistled, but Misery paid not the slightest attention to his blandishments. Wagging his tail frantically, he tore up to Nancy, and frisked about her.

"Misery, give me that bone." Nancy stooped over, and endeavored to take it from the struggling dog. "I cannot stop his eating in the streets. Oh, he's swallowed it!" Misery choked violently, and looked with reproachful eyes at his mistress. "You sinner," patting the soft brown body, "come along—that is," addressing Lloyd, "if you do not wish to detain us any longer."

"You are at liberty to go." Lloyd bowed stiffly.

"Hold on, Nancy; if you have no particular engagement, come with me to my office. I have a bottle of medicine to send your aunt," exclaimed Doctor Boyd hastily. "Good evening, gentlemen." And he bowed curtly to Lloyd and his friend.

On reaching F Street, the group of girls separated, and Nancy accompanied Doctor Boyd to his office.

"Go into the waiting room, Nancy," directed the surgeon. "It won't take me a moment to write the directions on the label of the bottle."

Obediently Nancy entered the room, followed by Misery, and as the surgeon disappeared into his consulting office, she glanced keenly about her. The room was empty. Quickly she bent over her dog, and took off his round leather collar.

Another searching glance about the room; then from a hollow cavity in the round collar, the opening of which was cleverly concealed by the buckle, she drew a tiny roll of tissue paper. Opening it, she read:

Find out Sheridan's future movements. Imperative.

Nancy dropped on her knees before the open grate, tossed the paper into the glowing embers, and watched it burn to the last scrap. A cold, wet nose against her hand roused her.

"Misery, you darling." She stooped, and buried her face in the wriggling body. "My little retriever!" Misery licked her face ecstatically. "If I only knew which way Sam went after giving you that message for me, much valuable time could be saved. As it is——" Doctor Boyd's entrance cut short her whispered words.

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Lloyd and his friend, Major Goddard, watched Nancy and her companions out of sight; then continued on their way to Wormley's Hotel, each busy with his own thoughts. The grill room of that famous hostelry was half empty when they reached there, and they had no difficulty in securing a table in a secluded corner. While Lloyd was giving his order to the waiter, Colonel Baker stopped at their table.

"Heard the news?" he asked eagerly; then not waiting for an answer: "They say at the department General Joe Johnston has been captured."

His words were overheard by Wormley, the colored proprietor, who was speaking to the head waiter.

"'Scuse me, Colonel Baker," he said deferentially. "You all ain't captured General Johnston. No, sah. I knows Marse Joe too well to b'lieve that."

Wormley was a privileged character, and his remark was received with good-natured laughter. Under cover of the noise, Baker whispered to Lloyd: "*Stanton has discovered his cipher code book has been tampered with.* Meet me at my office at five o'clock."

"All right, Colonel," and Baker departed.

By the time they had reached dessert, the grill room was deserted. Goddard lighted a cigar, and, lounging back in his chair, contemplated his host with keen interest.

"I can't understand it, Lloyd," he said finally.

"Understand what?" replied Lloyd, roused from his abstraction.

"Why you became a professional detective. With your social position, talents... "

"That's just it!"

"What?"

"My talents. If it had not been for them, I would have gone to West Point with you, Bob. But, above all else in the world I enjoy pitting my wits against another's—enjoy unravelling mysteries that baffle others. To me there is no excitement



equal to a man hunt. I suppose in a way it is an inheritance; my father was a great criminal lawyer, and his father before him. When Pinkerton organized the Secret Service division of the army in '61, I went with him, thinking I could follow my chosen profession and serve my country at the same time. Besides," with a trace of bitterness in his voice, "I owe society nothing; nor do I desire to associate with society people."

Goddard gazed sorrowfully at his friend. "Hasn't the old wound healed, Lloyd?" he asked softly.

"No; nor ever will," was the brief response, and Lloyd's face grew stern with the pain of other years. "As I told you, Bob, I was detailed here to solve a very serious problem for our government," he resumed, after a slight pause. "Baker has rounded up and arrested all persons suspected of corresponding with the rebels, and sent some to Old Capitol Prison, and others through the lines to Richmond, where they can do us no harm. Most of these spies gave themselves away by their secesh talk, or by boasting of their ability to run the blockade.

"But information of our armies' intended movements is still being carried out of Washington right under Baker's nose. It is imperative that this leak be stopped at once, or the Union forces may suffer another Bull Run. Baker and the provost marshal of the district have tried every means in their power to learn the methods and the identity of this spy, but so far without success."

"But have you found no trace in your search?" inquired Goddard eagerly.

"Until to-day I had only a theory; now I have a clue, a faint one, but——" Lloyd paused and glanced about the room to see that he was not overheard. They had the place to themselves, save for their waiter, Sam, who was busy resetting a table in the opposite corner. "I have told you, Bob, how I came to get this wound"—Lloyd touched his temple—"when on my way to Poolesville." Goddard nodded assent. "But I did not tell you that before the supposed trooper made good his escape his hat was knocked off and Symonds saw that the spy was a woman."

"A woman!" Goddard nearly dropped his cigar in his astonishment. "How did he find that out?"

"Her hair fell down her back when her hat was knocked off."

Goddard stared at his companion. "Well, I'll be—blessed!" he muttered.

"I have been looking for such a woman for some time, and until to-day without success," declared Lloyd calmly.

"Did she by chance leave any trace, any clues, behind her in her flight?"

"One." Lloyd pulled out his leather wallet. "On examining the hat, which he picked up on his return to where I was lying unconscious, Symonds found these hairs adhering to the lining. He put them in an envelope and brought them to me at the hospital." Lloyd drew out a small paper, which he opened with care. "Have you ever seen hair of that color before?"

Goddard took the opened paper, and glanced at its contents. A few red-gold hairs confronted him. Instantly his thoughts flew to the scene of that morning. In his mind's eye he saw the laughing face, the lovely curly Titian hair, and heard the mocking, alluring voice say: "I'm company." He slowly raised his head in time to see the steady gaze of their negro waiter fixed full upon the paper in his hand.

## **CHAPTER III**

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## **A KNOT OF RIBBON BLUE**

"I am so glad to see you, Major Goddard," said his hostess, stepping into the hall to greet the young officer, as the black butler admitted him. "It is a shame you could not get here in time to take supper with us."

"You are not half as disappointed as I, Mrs. Warren," replied Goddard, shaking hands warmly. "I was unavoidably detained at the War Department. Do please accept my sincere apologies for my unintentional rudeness."

"Why, of course; I was sure you could not help the delay. But I must not keep you standing in the hall." And she reëntered the parlor, closely followed by Goddard, who glanced about the room with well-bred curiosity.

It was the first time he had been entertained while in Washington. Senator Warren, to whom he had brought letters from mutual friends in the North, had insisted upon his waiving the formality of a first call. The invitation to supper had been seconded by a cordial note from Mrs. Warren, whom he had met two nights before at the Capitol, and he had accepted the invitation, not counting on the exigencies of the War Department.

The large rooms were comfortably filled with men and women, who sat or stood talking together in little groups. In the further corner a girl was seated at the grand piano; as she raised her head, Goddard recognized Nancy Newton. Mrs. Warren was on the point of introducing him to several of her guests when Nancy struck a few opening chords. Instantly the low hum of conversation ceased, and her clear mezzo-soprano voice filled the room:

He stole from its nest in my golden hair,  
A knot of ribbon blue;  
He placed on my hand a jewel rare,  
And whispered soft, as he held it there,  
"Tender and true,  
Adieu, adieu!"

Drawn by the charm of her voice, Goddard edged nearer and nearer the piano until he leaned against its side facing the singer. He scanned intently the downcast face, the soft, rippling hair, the broad brow, and sensitive red lips. Attracted by the steadiness of his gaze, she raised her eyes to his. For one brief second soul gazed into soul; then the hazel eyes fell before the gray ones, and a rich wave of color mantled Nancy's cheeks as her voice rose in birdlike notes:

They brought my soldier home to me,  
And my knot of ribbon blue;  
But the cruel wound on his brow was hid  
By the flag draped over the coffin lid!  
Tender and true,  
Adieu, adieu!

Silence followed the last note as it died away, for the song struck home. Northern and Southern sympathizers alike swallowed a suspicious lump as they thought of their loved ones far away on a field of strife, and the applause was late in coming.

"Upon my soul, Nancy, that is a doleful song." Doctor Boyd strode over to the piano. "Give us something cheerful. Play 'Dixie.'"

"Indeed, you will do nothing of the sort," declared Mrs. Warren, as Nancy's fingers strayed over the keys. "Do you suppose I want the provost marshal's men camping on my doorstep? Play 'Yankee Doodle' if you wish; but first, Nancy, I want you to meet Major Goddard—Miss Newton. Doctor Boyd, this is our friend Major Goddard, who is here on leave."

Nancy simply bowed in acknowledgment of the introduction, but Doctor Boyd held out his hand in hearty greeting.

"Glad to meet you, Major." Seeing Goddard's face more clearly as a guest moved from before one of the lamps, he added: "Why, you are the officer who wished to arrest us this morning, eh, Nancy?"

"Oh, no, sir," protested Goddard hastily. "Captain Lloyd and I simply wanted to—to——"

"Don't apologize," retorted the doctor. "Stanton would like nothing better than to send me to Old Capitol Prison; but they can't spare my services, so I am left free to practice my profession."

"What are you growling about now?" asked Senator Warren, reaching around the doctor to shake hands with Goddard. "Has my wife left you to the tender mercies of Doctor John, Major? Come on, and I will introduce you to Mrs. Bennett."

"From bad to worse," chuckled the doctor. "She will be claiming your scalp, Major. Come to me when you want a hair restorer."

Mrs. Bennett, a very pretty woman with mincing manners, received Goddard graciously, and made room for him on the sofa by her.

"Your name is already familiar to us," she said, "for your gallant conduct at Cedar Creek was mentioned in all despatches. Mrs. Arnold," touching a stout woman who sat next her on the shoulder to attract her attention, "may I present Major Robert Goddard?"

"How do you do." Mrs. Arnold held out a fat, jeweled hand in welcome. Her good-natured face was creased in smiles. "My nephew, John Gurley, has spoken of you so often that I feel as if we were old friends."

"That is very kind of you, Mrs. Arnold," said Goddard gratefully. "John gave me a letter of introduction, but I have been so busy since my arrival here I have had no chance to call on you."

"How is John?"

"Very well, and very busy since he has been given his troop."

"Is that the handsome boy who was with you on sick leave last November, Mrs. Arnold?" asked Mrs. Bennett, raising her eyes languidly to look more closely at Goddard. "My husband was quite jealous of his attentions. So absurd, you know. Ah!" She purred as Doctor Boyd drew up a chair and sat down by her. "My old antagonist! How are you this evening?"

"Still unreconstructed," retorted the doctor. He turned and surveyed the room, brilliant with the glitter of uniforms and handsome toilets, and his penetrating old eyes grew moist as he read the sorrow and anxiety which both men and women hid beneath feverish excitement and forced gayety.

Until the breaking out of the war, Washington was almost entirely a Southern city. After the firing on Sumter, it became a house divided, and brother fought brother, while Washington women stifled their moans of anguish, and faced the world with a bravery which equaled that shown on the battlefield.

"How lovely Nancy Newton looks to-night," went on the doctor, suddenly realizing that Mrs. Bennett was waiting for him to speak.

"I cannot agree with you." Mrs. Bennett's sleepy eyes opened, and the soft purr left her voice. "Those pink roses in her red hair are quite too daring for good taste."

"Daring," echoed Mrs. Arnold, but half catching Mrs. Bennett's remark. "Daring, did you say? Nancy is downright bold. The idea of that young girl going to parties given by the officers in the camps about here. Such conduct



would not have been tolerated in my day." And she squared her ponderous shoulders.

"There were no camps in your day, Mrs. Arnold," retorted the doctor dryly. "Nancy was chaperoned there by Mrs. Warren. Do you question our hostess' conduct?"

Alarmed at the very suggestion of such a thing, Mrs. Arnold instantly backed water.

"I—I—was not informed Mrs. Warren went with her. But, Doctor, take a kindly word from me, and warn Nancy that she must be more circumspect in her conduct. She is already being talked about."

"By a lot of scandal mongers, whose word I would not take on oath," exclaimed the doctor hotly.

"One moment, Doctor John," cooed Mrs. Bennett. "It has been whispered that Nancy is suspected of aiding and abetting the enemy, although," spitefully, "she does sing our songs so well."

"And what of that? Half Washington suspects the other half of sending contraband goods through the lines. I don't doubt some of our unimpeachable friends carry quinine concealed in their bustles."

"Well, really, Doctor!" Mrs. Arnold's face rivaled her cherry gown in color. "Such things were not mentioned in my day," she ended feebly.

"Civil war brings strange usages," the doctor smiled grimly, "and to-day's conduct cannot be judged by the standards of

the past. I am sorry to shock your sensibilities, but you ladies must not believe all you hear."

"What scandal are you discussing so vigorously?" called Nancy from a near-by window seat.

Mrs. Bennett jumped perceptibly as Nancy's soft voice reached her. "Dear child, how you startle one! Have you been there long?" Her voice rose to a sharper key.

"Miss Nancy and I have just returned from the back parlor," volunteered her escort, a tall officer, wearing the red stripes of the artillery on his well-worn uniform. As he walked toward Mrs. Bennett, she detained him for a moment.

Goddard, who had been an interested listener to the doctor's defense of Nancy, rose from his seat on the sofa, and, seizing his opportunity, stepped over to the alcove and joined the young girl.

"How is my friend, Misery?" he asked.

"Very miserable, indeed, when I left him this afternoon. He does not enjoy being away from me."

"I dare swear he is not alone in that," laughed Goddard. "Won't you sing again, Miss Newton?"

"Not to-night. Are you, by chance, the Major Goddard whom my friend, John Gurley, is always talking and writing about?"

"Yes; John is in my regiment. We are chums, you know."

"I saw a great deal of Captain Gurley when he was with his aunt, Mrs. Arnold, in November. We had great fun together."

Nancy laughed at a passing recollection. "In his last letter he urged me to come to Winchester and make a long-promised visit at my cousins, the Pages."

"Why don't you?" asked Goddard eagerly. "We can give you a very good time there. The officers' mess has organized a weekly hop, although girls are scarce, and I am sure we can arrange some other amusements for you."

"I hesitate to make any definite plans," replied Nancy thoughtfully, "for General Sheridan is likely to skedaddle out of the Valley at any moment, and I would not enjoy being captured by Early."

"We are billed to stay there some time longer," replied Goddard confidently. "The roads are in no condition to move cavalry and artillery. There really is no prospect of our leaving winter quarters until later on."

"In that case I will ask Aunt Metoaca's permission to go."

"I expect to return day after to-morrow, Miss Newton; it would give me great pleasure to escort you to Winchester if you can arrange to go as soon as that."

"I will talk it over with Aunt Metoaca," was Nancy's non-committal reply, and Goddard's face fell.

"May I call and see your aunt?" he pleaded eagerly. "I am sure I can convince her that it is safe for you to make the trip."

"Under your escort," laughed Nancy. In the soft lamplight Goddard caught the witchery of her eyes, and his heart gave a most unaccustomed thump against his ribs. "Take