

**ELDER CONKLIN  
AND  
OTHER STORIES**

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Elder Conklin and other stories by Frank Harris

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**FRANK HARRIS**

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✠ ELDER ✠  
CONKLIN AND  
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✠ BY ✠  
FRANK HARRIS

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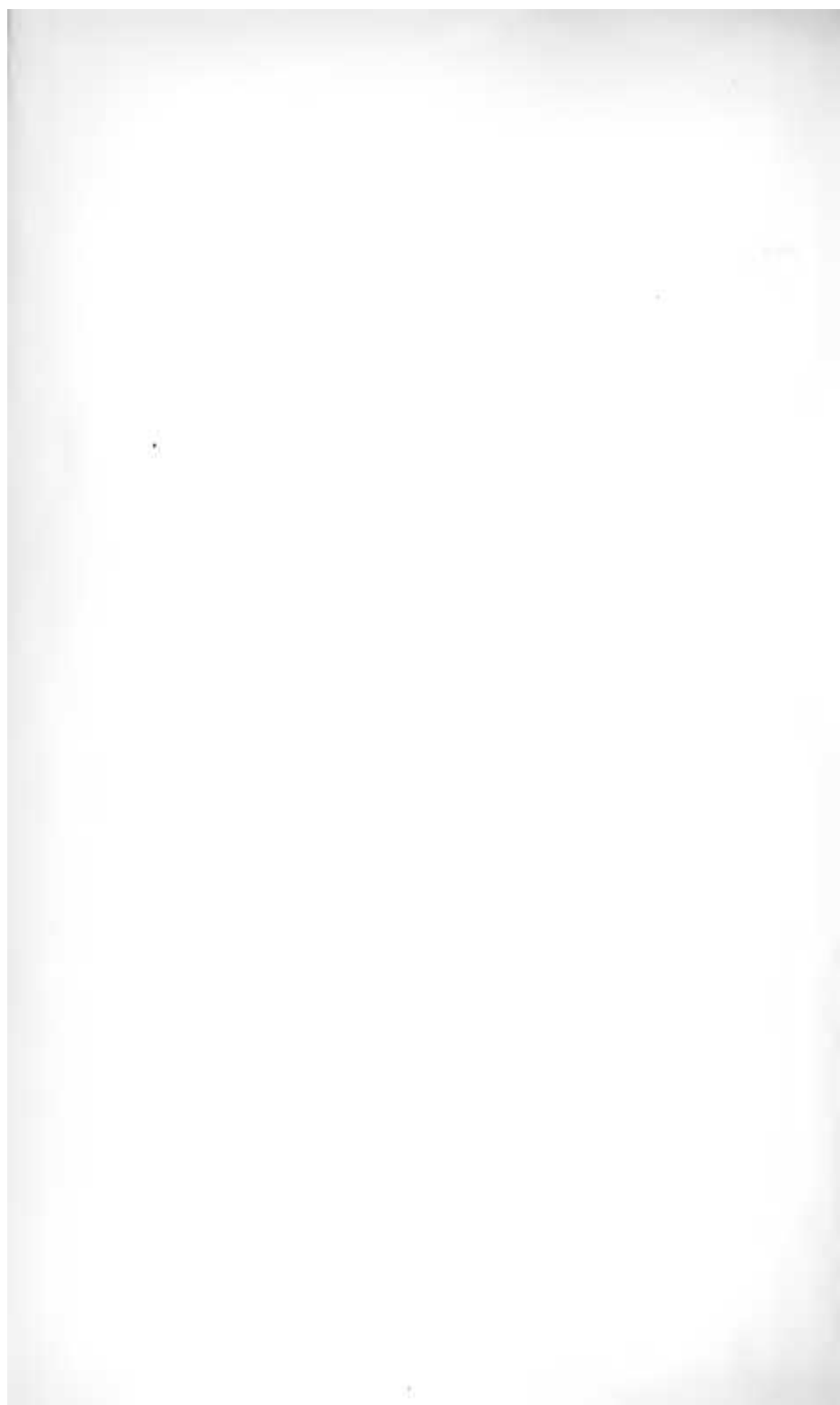
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ELDER CONKLIN.





## ELDER CONKLIN.

AS soon as the Elder left the supper-table his daughter and the new schoolmaster went out on the stoop or verandah which ran round the frame-house. The day had been warm, but the chilliness of the evening air betokened the near approach of the Indian summer. The house stood upon the crest of what had been a roll in the prairie, and as the two leant together on the railing of the stoop, they looked out over a small orchard of peach-trees to where, a couple of hundred yards away, at the foot of the bluff, Cottonwood Creek ran, fringed on either bank by the trees which had suggested its name. On the horizon to their right, away beyond the spears of yellow maize, the sun was sinking, a ball of orange fire against the rose mist of the sky. When the girl turned towards him, perhaps to avoid the level rays, Bancroft expressed the hope that she would go with him to the house-warming. A little stiffly Miss Conklin replied that she'd be pleased, but——

"What have I done, Miss Loo, to offend you?" the young man spoke deprecatingly.

"Nothin', I guess," she answered, with assumed indifference.

"When I first came you were so kind and helped

me in everything. Now for the last two or three days you seem cold and sarcastic, as if you were angry with me. I'd be sorry if that were so—very sorry."

"Why did you ask Jessie Stevens to go with you to the house-warmin'?" was the girl's retort.

"I certainly didn't ask her," he replied hotly. "You must know I didn't."

"Then Seth lied!" exclaimed Miss Conklin. "But I guess he'll not try that again with me—Seth Stevens I mean. He wanted me to go with him to-night, and I didn't give him the mitten, as I should if I'd thought you were goin' to ask me."

"What does 'giving the mitten' mean?" he questioned, with a puzzled air.

"Why, jest the plainest kind of refusal, I guess; but I only told him I was afraid I'd have to go with you, seein' you were a stranger. 'Afraid,'" she repeated, as if the word stung her. "But he'll lose nothin' by waitin', nothin'. You hear me talk." And her eyes flashed.

As she drew herself up in indignation, Bancroft thought he had never seen anyone so lovely. "A perfect Hebe," he said to himself, and started as if he had said the words aloud. The comparison was apt. Though Miss Loo Conklin was only seventeen, her figure had all the ripeness of womanhood, and her height—a couple of inches above the average—helped to make her look older than she was. Her face was more than pretty; it was, in fact, as beautiful as youth, good features, and healthy colouring could make it. A knotted mass of chestnut hair set off the shapely head; the large blue eyes were