Dialect Tales

Katherine Sherwood Bonner McDowell

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Dedicated
TO MY DEAR FRIEND MRS. S. B. S.
WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE.

Her angel face,
As the great eye of Heaven, shined bright,
And made a sunshine in a shady place.

THE GENTLEMEN OF SARSAR.

I.

SARSAR! The very name of the place was sinister! Who does not remember De Quincey's Sarsar wind of desolation, and the chill shudder that quivered through the soul as the harsh adjective came blowing like a discord into the music of that incomparable writing?

Not a misgiving, however, crossed my heart when, shortly before Christmas, my father asked me if I thought myself possessed of the qualifications necessary for collecting a bad debt.

The business of collecting, father, said I, with what malicious friends called my prize−poem manner, is odious in some of its features to a man of spirit; but it may bring into play some of the finest faculties of the human mind.

And body, added my father, in a quiet sort of way.

If courage is needed, said I, laughing, I am the son of my State the State that does not know how to surrender! As for tact, civility, address, urbanity, and downright stubbornness, these desirable qualities are surely mine by right of inheritance.

Well, well, said my father, meditatively, it is a pretty rough place, Sarsar is. The debt is one thousand dollars; and if you get this sum, or any part of it, I don't mind saying it is yours for a Christmas−box.

For many reasons these were delightful words. First, while I fully intended that my life should teem with good things, at present it was as bare and empty as a sun−dried skull. My father, with the best intentions in the world, was so indifferent to the doctrines of Malthus as to become the parent of a perfect brood of young ones, each of whom had to stand on his own legs as soon as they were strong enough. I was at the beginning of my career, and made shift to get on; but such a sugar−plum as a thousand dollars had never dropped into my mouth. As befitted my slim purse, I was madly, unutterably in love in love with Angie Bell, the prettiest girl, I would swear, among a million picked beauties. With the thousand dollars fairly mine, I should be able to offer her those delicate attentions man delights to lavish on the woman he adores buggy drives and bonbons, new music, books, and bouquets. Thus I should weave myself, as it were, into her life, keep her little heart in a perpetual simmer of kindly feeling, and dispose her to look tenderly on my encroaching passion, nor resist when its tide should sweep her from her moorings into my arms. Unless reflected I it might be better to trust to winning her solely on my merits, and, the betrothal an accomplished fact, spend all the sum in the purchase of a troth gift in some degree worthy of her inspiring beauty.

Absorbed in the pleasing perplexity of such a question, I was only aroused from my reverie by my father's tones, raised a good deal above their ordinary level.

Yes, old Ruck is as saucy and rough a tonic as any man could swallow. You will need all your mother−wit in dealing with him. The old scamp swears it is not a just debt, and pay it he will not.

Sarsar nothing more than a backwoods settlement, is it?

Nothing. And there are people up among those hills who actually try to vote for General Jackson to−day! A good many worthless negroes have congregated in the place, who fight, quarrel, and steal without much interference from anybody. There are a lot of rough fellows, however, calling themselves 'the Gentlemen of Sarsar,' who regulate things after their own fashion. Chief among them is *your* man Andy Rucker. He has unbounded influence with his *clientèle*, and, they say, understands how to use the shot−gun better than any man in the county.

Never think to daunt me, father, said I, briskly. I shall go to Sarsar, and shall fetch back the money.

A few days later I got off at a station ten miles east of Sarsar, and, hiring a horse, set out for a ride across the country. The hills were steep, the road rough, the people rougher. At the cabins where I stopped to ask the way they looked on me as a stranger from a far−off land.

Do git down and look at your creetur, was their invariable remark, and one that puzzled me exceedingly, until I found it was an hospitable invitation to dismount for a rest.

Reaching Sarsar, I was directed to the Widow Joplin's as a place of entertainment. The widow, a tired−looking woman, with her lips drawn down at the corners as if they needed kissing into shape, put me into the hands of a bright mulatto boy, whom she called Dee Jay. This worthy conducted me to my chamber, and asked if I would like some oysters for supper.

Oysters, by all means; a couple of dozen, fancy roast.

Lor', marster, we ain't got so many in de house; an' *ef* we had, I 'clar to gracious, marster, two dozen two−poun' cans would kill you, sho'.

Cans! Is it canned oysters you offered me?

Yes, sir Cove. We had some fresh ones onct I disremember what year it wus. But, lor'! we didn't know how ter open 'em, an' we jest pounded away at 'em wid brickbats till Mars' Andy come an' showed us how. Ain't it curus how dey kin live an' breathe de breff o' life shet up in dem tight shells?

Declining to enter into a discussion on, oysters, I asked if Mars' Andy was Mr. Rucker.

Yes, sir. Captin Rucker we mostly calls him. You acquainted wid him?

No; but to make his acquaintance happens to be my business here.

Is dat so? cried Dee Jay, with increased respect in his tones. An' I made sho' you wus a−drummin' for seggars. Mars' Andy ain't very fond o' dem drummin' men, he went on, confidentially; in fac', dey ain't popular wid none o' dem lazy, long−legged Rucker boys. Dey kin fairly devil a stranger out o' toun if dey takes a notion. Hope you ain't gwine ter tread on de captin's toes, marster. He's a awful man to have a rassel wid.

He must be a terrible fellow, said I, laughing.

Lor', dey ain't no harm in Mars' Andy. He's de head man in dis toun. He's as full o' pranks an' capers as a unbroke colt; but he's got as much sense as a horse.

With that compliment, in every way worthy of a returned Gulliver, my innocent Yahoo took me to the Widow Joplin's dining−room.

Before I had well finished my supper a tall man strode into the room, followed by two of the daintiest, prettiest little black− and−tan thorough−bred pups I had ever seen.

How Angie would dote on them! thought I.

The master of the pups was a noticeable man. Tall and broad−shouldered, with clean−cut features, and bright black eyes so far not differing from any other. But his hair marked him among men as Samson's among the

Philistines. Long and heavy, and iron−gray in color, it fell in actual ringlets to his shoulders, and gave almost a look of ferocity to his countenance.

A character! said I to myself, and longed to hear him speak.

The wish was not allowed to grow cold, as he came directly to me with:

I hear, sir, there is a stranger in town who wants to see Andy Rucker. That's my name. Yours is

Ned Merewether, at your service, said I, rising, with extended hand. You have met my father.

Oh yes; I am well acquainted with Jack Merewether, he said, giving me a prolonged look. Well, Ned, let's take a drink.

Knowing the offence I should give by a refusal, I assented, though dreading the villanous compound I should have to swallow under the name of old bourbon.

One drink followed another, and my head began to buzz a little. Several men dropped in, who were introduced by Mr. Rucker as kinsmen and friends. I proposed a health to the Gentlemen of Sarsar, and the scene grew convivial.

What d'ye think of our country, mister? said an ill−looking youth, whom they addressed by the tender title of Honey Rucker.

It's as fine a country as I ever saw, responded I. But you don't have many rich men, I suppose?

Rich men! cried Mr. Rucker, in a tone of compassion; why, youngster, we are *all* rich, only we don't like to show off. Good families like the Ruckers never make a parade. Now and then such a fellow as Yowell wants to spread himself. You remember, boys, how he went to old Nathan Weeks's funeral?

Rather! said Honey Rucker, in a gloomy tone.

It was a big funeral, and most of us walked, for carriages are unhandy on our roads. But Yowell wanted to make a show, so he and his must ride. He and his wife were in a four−wheeled gig, and every Jack and Gill of his seven children was toted by a likely negro boy, who sat astride a two− hundred−dollar mule. Now, each one of those Africans would have sold for fifteen hundred dollars aggregate, ten thousand five hundred dollars; the mules summed up to fourteen hundred dollars making a clean sum of eleven thousand nine hundred dollars winding along these hills as unconcerned as a snake. What do you think of that for style?

Quite in the style of the Arabian Nights! said I.

'Better worth seeing than the *aurora borealis*,' quoted Mr. Honey Rucker.

Ah! there are some queer people up here among these hills, said Captain Andy, with a shake of the head.

What do you do in the way of sport? asked I.

Everything chase foxes, run deer, spear fish. But our grand sport with sudden animation our Christmas frolic, is a nigger hunt.

A *what?*

A negro chase perhaps you would call it. You see, our jail is such a ram−shackle affair that it is next to impossible to keep a prisoner in bonds, if he has any get−up−and−get in his make−up. The rascals break out and take to the hills. And when the humor takes us we hunt them down.

There was a laughing devil in Mr. Rucker's eye, and I knew not what to think. Determined, however, not to seem unsophisticated, I said, coolly,

I should think such game would give you but a short run.

Humph! put twenty hounds on a black rascal's track they can scent it after it's a day old and he will run faster than a deer, and out−manoeuvre a fox in dodging corners.

Poor souls!

They haven't any souls, I fancy, said Mr. Rucker, easily; 'poor bodies' would be more to the point, as they have to clip it to a galloping tune. Come, sir; no use walking on stilts away from home. Join us in our next hunt.

The man seemed as sober as a christened saint, but I felt I was the butt of a joke, and secretly resented it.

Well, sir, said I, I did not come here to make acquaintance with the sports of the gentry.

And may I presume to ask why you *did* come? inquired Mr. Rucker, with vast politeness.

You should know best, sir, as I represent the firm of Avery &Merewether.

Aha! I remember something was said of certain moneys that your people fancied I owed them.

Fancy me no fancies, Mr. Rucker certainly the whiskey had gone into my head *the money has to be paid.*

And you are the man that's to get it? Well, well, it would be a pity you should not have what you have come so far to gain all, and more. I insist you should have more. I myself ought to make you a little gift.

Very well, I said, good−humoredly, I will gladly accept these little beauties and I caught up Mr. Rucker's pups.

For your sweetheart?

For the prettiest girl in the county! said I, laughing, and with a warm glow at my heart at the bare thought of my lovely little angel, Angie Bell.

II.

Awaking with a clear head the next morning, I hurried out to seek Mr. Rucker; but, to my annoyance, that eccentric gentleman was nowhere to be found. Every one of whom I inquired was too stupid even to guess at his whereabouts.

De captin is jes' like de sun, said my sympathizing valet, Dee Jay: sometimes he will shine out on folks, an' agin, when de notion takes him, he will go under a cloud, an' you can't put your finger on de place whar he is hid.

And how long is it his majesty's pleasure to stay under a cloud?

It 'ud take a wizard man to tell dat, marster.

I went to his house, hoping to see some member of his family; but no one came to the door, though I rapped and pounded half an hour.

He ain't got no family. De Rucker blood is purty nigh run out in dis county.

Why, I thought every other man in it was a Rucker.

Well, dey is mostly cousins, or dey jes' tuk de name fur glory. Mars' Andy had a lot of brothers onct, an' a par; but dey wus killed, all along through de war one a−bushwhackin', one a−fightin' wid Morgan, one wid de fever, an' so on. Mars' Andy hisself had a squeak fur his life onct on a time. He wus lyin' on de field bleedin' from seventeen or eighteen wounds, when along comes a calvary man a−swingin' of his saviour

Dee Jay! what in the name of Heaven are you saying?

Along comes a calvary man on a big black horse, a−swingin' his saviour in de air till it looked as round as a cart−wheel an' flashed like de moon on fire. Mars' Andy shet his eyes an' begun ter say his prayers; when pop! bang! off went a musket from behind a tree, an' down went Mr. Rider jes' like a grasshopper when a turkey gobbler nips him off a sweet−pertater vine!

De captin tuk on mightily about our side gittin' beat, continued Dee Jay, encouraged by my laughter; he ain't let his hair grow sence Vicksburg fell, an' it turned grisly gray dat same night. It was jes' struck all of a heap. Dat's why de people here think so much o' Mars' Andy. Dey has sech respec' fur his strong feelin's.

I wish his strong feelings would lead him to pay his debts, muttered I.

Mr. Rucker was not so cruel as to stay under a cloud all day. In the afternoon he burst into my room, beaming like the sun to which he had been compared.

It's all settled, my friend, he cried.

What! the debt?

Bother the debt! A question of money should not arise between gentlemen.

Gentlemen should pay what they owe, said I, grimly.

Softly, lad, softly. You are almost on the point of being uncivil, in which case I should have to leave you to yourself.

Dreading another disappearance on Mr. Rucker's part, I said,

Really, sir, I had no intention of being uncivil. What is it that is settled?

The chase the hunt for the horny−heeled son of Ham.

That joke again?

No joke about it. There is an idle fellow here Bud Kane by name who was caught hog−stealing about a month back. He has been hiding among the hills, and we think it well to get him off our hands before Christmas.

You wouldn't kill the man?

Oh no; only scare him a bit. If he gives us a good run we will let him off scot−free. And he is the fleetest scamp in the country. Lucky to be able to offer you such sport.

My good Mr. Rucker, said I, attempting to speak with great moderation, unequalled as such sport must be, you must allow me to decline a share in it. You know my object in coming here

My dear fellow, interrupted Rucker, that is all right. I have plenty of money burning for your pocket. But just now I can't think of anything but the merry hunt! Come! let us have it over, and then to business. I will promise that you shall be fully satisfied. Perhaps, however, you are not a rider?

It was silly of me, but I was really piqued, and thought I should like to show this rough man of Sarsar whether I could ride or not. I reflected, too, that it might be well to humor his wish and join his hunting−party it would probably turn out some portentous joke played by the Gentlemen of Sarsar. After it was played out, Mr. Rucker could hardly fail to meet my demands, hand over the money, and let me get back to civilization civilization and Angie Bell.

Well, well, said I, carelessly, get me a decent mount, and I'll join your party, whereon Mr. Rucker gave a tremendous grin and hurried away.

At a ridiculously early hour the next morning I was aroused by a wild Halloo! under my window. Looking out, I saw the Gentlemen of Sarsar in force some twenty or more vagabond−looking fellows, mounted on horses too nobly built for such riders, all laughing, gesticulating, and occasionally firing at the incautious chickens roosting in the trees about the house. They were rigged out like a lot of banditti. Some were armed with rifles, and all seemed to have equipped themselves with what was left over from their war equipments, including horse−pistols and bowie−knives, cavalry boots and devil−may−care hats. I must say I felt uncommonly ticklish as much so as if I had been in Arabia with a set of Bedouins inviting me for sport to plunder one of the desert caravans. However, I gulped down my scruples with the morning cocktail which we all took at the bar of the Widow Joplin, and listened patiently while Mr. Rucker gasconaded about the wonderful shots he had made, the tremendous leaps his horse had taken over gullies and logs.

Unless you can stand rip−racing through the country as if you were trying to shake hands with the lightning, said he, you had better not try to keep up with the hunt, but take a stand on some overlooking hill

Mr. Rucker, cried I, spare yourself any fears for me!

All right, then. Let's be off; boys!

They leaped to their saddles with Texan agility; half a dozen stag−hounds were brought to the front, and with another Halloo! we were off.

Never shall I forget that ride. The keen morning air was a stimulus that thrilled every sense to alertness. Mr. Rucker carolled, in a robust voice:

Last night, in my late rambles,
All in the isle of Skye,

I met a lovely creature,
All in the mountains high.

But the only lovely creature we met was the lady−moon queen of this wild world of wood and mountain and stream, now almost out of sight, as day was beginning to dawn. The hills, near and far, rose like waking giants to meet the pale, blinking stars; lights twinkled from the valley below; little piping birds mingled their shrill notes with the sound of the wood−chopper's axe.

We rode at a brisk trot, Mr. Rucker and I in the rear. Suddenly a cry was heard from one of the advance−guard. I pressed forward, my mind's eye filled with a fine buck who sniffed the tainted gale and sprung with beautiful fear from his pursuers. Instead of which I saw a figure on *two legs* but

Whether man or woman,
Whether ghoul or human,

I could not tell at the distance spring across the field as if Satan's fiends were after him.

From this time all is confusion in my memory. Wild, wild riding I recall, and a sense of reckless delight that vented itself in shrill cries to my horse. The sun was just darting up in slim scarlet lances. A light wind blew, and the very drops of blood in my veins seemed to dance like the pine−needles in the wind. What we pursued I no longer knew. I was beside myself with the passion of the chase. Logs, bogs, nor brooks appalled me. Fences and gullies were as shadows leaped over in a dream. The infernal baying of the hounds was music to my ear. Noble sport this, truly! Now and then there was a glimpse of a flying figure a male Atalanta bounding over the ground with splendid speed; and finally a sudden pull−up a *something* at bay and a sound of rifles snapping and hounds yelping.

Fire, lad, fire! cried Mr. Rucker.

For God's sake tell me is it a man?

Fire in the air, if you have any doubt, he said, with a great laugh, and firing his own rifle at a tree−top. Wild with excitement, I essayed to do the same. My horse plunged my gun went off an awful cry followed the report, and a voice shrieked: He has killed him! He has shot Bud Kane!

I leaped from my horse and rushed to the spot. There, truly, lay a man a muscular, finely−shaped young negro, entirely nude but for a fox skin thrown over his shoulders. He was panting heavily, and his blood was staining the yellow sedge−grass.

I could not believe my eyes. I was almost distracted. Had *I* done this horrible deed? Had I slain an inoffensive fellow−creature, whose hands were certainly clean toward me, no matter how many Sarsar hogs he had stolen? Innocent I felt myself, yet guilty with a horrible guiltiness; for there lay the poor wretch bleeding, like Marco Bozzaris, and not a man among them all spoke a word of comfort.

III.

A LITTER was made of the boughs of pine−trees and Bud Kane lifted upon it. Mr. Rucker and I rode in advance of the bearers, to prepare Bud's mother for the reception of her son.

Man alive! cried Andy, impatiently, why did you not fire in the air? Did you not see we were all doing so?

I saw nothing. Why did you lead me into such a devil's business?

My dear Merewether, he said in a cool, dry tone, like Shakspeare' s Jew, you bettered my instruction.

At the door of a particularly mean−looking cabin Mr. Rucker called a halt. A veritable hag sat in the door−way old, black, lean, and wrinkled, but with a head of crisp wool as bushy as a box−plant. This person was engaged in the curious operation of roping her hair that is, dividing it into small strands, each one of which was wrapped tightly to its end with a white cotton string.

Hello, Aunt Diana! said Mr. Rucker.

Why, Mars' Andy! Dat you? What brings you here dis hour in de mornin'? Want a drink o' buttermilk?

No; I've some bad news for you. Bud has met with an accident.

What's dat you tell me?

She sprung to her feet. Anything more uncanny and witch−like than her appearance cannot be imagined. On one side of her head her hair stood out like an electrified mane, evidently fresh from a vigorous carding; on the other it lay flat in little snaky cotton twists. Her eyes rolled till they seemed all white. One hand was on her hip; the other stretched toward us with clinched fist.

Mr. Rucker ran over the details of the accident without mentioning my name. But she pinned me on the spot.

I s'pose you did it, she said, seein' as you are a stranger? Der ain't none o' de boys here would a−been so clumsy.

Yes, my horse reared, and my gun went off accidentally. I am very sorry

Sorrow don't butter no corn−pone, she interrupted, in a high key. I mistrusted sompen wrong yesterday when Mars' Andy Rucker wus here persuadin' Bud ter take part in his onmannerly, onchristian rampage.

What, cried I, in a passion in my turn, it was a sell, then after all?

Mr. Rucker smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

You would a−thought so, screamed Mother Kane, if you had a−heerd him beggin' Bud an' bribin' him to take de job. Bud warn's noways anxious to dress hisself up in a fox−skin an' go tarin' over de country, an' let de hounds be turned loose on him. But says Mars' Andy, 'We will post horses in de thickets, so that you can ride from one point to annudder, an' save your strength to dash across de open fields an' keep ahead o' de hunt. An' it will be a big frolic, Bud,' he says; 'an' when it's done you shell have a quart o' rum an' five dollars fur de night's work.' Five dollars looked big enough to cover de sun an' moon, it did! So he gin his consent, an'

here's de end of it Bud killed, an' me left ter scuffle along de heavenly powers knows how!

She threw her apron over her head and began to weep.

I knowed mischief wus comin', she sobbed. Twarn't on'y las' week dat ole Debby, de witch 'ooman, tole my fortune on de shoulder−blade of a sheep, an' likewise de bres' bone of a goose. 'Troubles dark an' many,' she says, 'an' a funeral in de house, an' a hard row ter hoe!' An' I jis tell you, young man dropping her apron and shaking her extraordinary old head at me *I'll* have de law of you. Dis ain't nuthin' short of murder, it ain't.

It was an accident, I cried; and whatever I *can* do to make amends you may be sure I *will* do.

Den you kin jist hen' me over some money fur de funeral expenses an' odder matters.

How much do you want?

Jes' put it to yourself, sir. Don't you think if you wus tore away from your pa, an' his ole age left widout support, he would ax a purty high figger to cover de loss?

I think, said I, with much internal bitterness, if my father could see me at this moment he would think twenty−five dollars a high value for my head.

Well, gimme dat, marster, an' I'll be satisfied.

I handed her the sum, and we left the house, just as the men bearing Bud on the litter came in sight and the old mother began her distracting screams.

Rucker, said I, as we rode away Rucker and my voice trembled with rage as I am a living man you shall give me satisfaction for this.

Let a harmless jest go by, he said, coldly, and consider your own position. I am bound to tell you that you are in some danger. The negroes here are a wild lot, and, backed by certain lawless white men I could mention, would just as soon lynch you as not.

That I own would be quite in keeping with what I have seen of the Gentlemen of Sarsar.

We will discuss the matter farther when you are rested. You look fagged out, said Mr. Rucker, with an air of paternal interest.

At the Widow Joplin's I shut myself into my room, and, throwing myself on my bed, fell into as profound a sleep as if to shoot a man before breakfast was nothing more serious than to bag a lot of birds.

Toward noon Mr. Rucker came back. His face was drawn into solemn lines, his ringlets hung damp and uncurled.

Kane is dead, he said.

No!

The wound seemed a trifle at first; but traumatic tetanus set in, and he went off like a shot.

I would give my right hand to undo this morning's work.

Come, man, don't be cast down. My advice is that you come with me at once to a magistrate and give yourself up. I will go bail for your appearance at the April court. I need not ask if you will be sure to be on hand?

If I allow you to be my bondsman such a question is an insult, said I, haughtily.

Exactly. I will go your bail for say two thousand dollars. And since this sum, like the rod of Aaron, swallows up the smaller amount you came to collect, we will let *that* matter rest over until you come on to your trial eh?

I am in your hands, Mr. Rucker, said I, fiercely, and feeling like a rat in a trap, and have no alternative but to do as you suggest. But my father will be here as my legal adviser, and I can tell you this whole thing will be well sifted.

Your father may count on my aid and friendship, said Mr. Rucker, with the air of a generous potentate, both for his sake and yours.

As he spoke there was a rap at the door, and a trim mulatto girl answered to my Come in. There was a gypsy beauty in her bold black eyes, and mischief lurked in the corners of her mouth; but she made a tolerably modest courtesy, and said,

If you please, sir, I wus gwine ter be married.

That is not surprising, said Mr. Rucker, seeing me at a loss how to reply to this unexpected confidence. I should think all the young bucks in the country would be after you.

I ain't gwine ter boast o' dat, Mars' Andy, for you knows I never wus one o' dem flirtin', owdacious gals dat would jest as soon sleep in de calaboose as anywhar else. But I wus gwine ter marry decent an' respectable as any white lady, an' have a gold ring an' piller−shams. An' now he's gone an' got killed, and I ain't got nobody ter marry; and I jes' wish I was dead, too.

Here she began to weep, and, with a pang at the heart, I realized that before me stood another victim of my fatal shot. It was Bud Kane whom she was to marry!

My poor girl said I.

Don't you poor girl me! she cried, viciously. I'm jest as free as anybody, and I don't want no foolin' nor soft talk from you nor no other white gentleman!

Well, what *do* you want? said I, roughly.

My circumstances is these, she said, checking her tears: that I have give up a good place I had at five dollars a month, an' have spent all my savin's an' givin's a−buyin' weddin' clothes an' a feather−bed, which I am meanin' to swap off to the Widder Joplin for the tombstone of her fust husband, an' set it up over poor Bud; the verses on it bein' ekally upproprite, as they only says:

'He wus too bright fur earth,
He wus taken from our hearth.
Of angels ther wus a dearth,
So they welcomed him with mirth.'

That is a fine idea of yours, said Mr. Rucker; but you wander from the point.

No, sir, I'm jest a−comin' to it. Seein' as I am all throwed out an' disadvantaged, I thought if I had ten or twelve dollars I could go to town, an' git a place an' earn my livin'; an' it looked like de gentleman dat shot Bud ought tu holp me along a little to kerry out my projecs an' git de better o' my afflictions.

My hand was in my pocket. I pulled it out holding a bill, and bade good−bye to Bud Kane's interesting sweetheart.

You did well, said Mr. Rucker; a policy of conciliation now, by all means.

Our business at the magistrate's was soon transacted; but after leaving his office we found it a matter of difficulty to get past the crowd. A mob of negroes had collected, and muttered threats made my blood run cold. Plainly Sarsar was no longer a safe place for me.

On reaching the inn I found myself awaited at the door of my room by an imposing−looking old darkey, with white hair and a stout cane.

Good−day, sir, said he. If your name is young Mr. Merewether I would like a few words wid you.

All right, uncle; come in. And I threw open the door and flung myself into a chair.

Give me de satisfacshun to intreduce myse'f, said the old man, with dignity, as de parster of de Fust Methodis' Church, limited.

Limited to what? said I, profanely.

To de godly an' to de seekers; an' to dis latter class our departed brudder, Bud Kane, belonged. He wus a seekin' sperrit.

Bud Kane again!

Dat pore wild lad lost his life as so many of our color loses der manly sperrit by submittin' to de white folks as if dey wus monkeys instid o' men. But, in despite of Bud bein' in some sort a son of Belial, he *wanted* ter do what wus right; an' he hed agreed ter give us a small sum toward erectin' a edifice fur prayer an' praise, de present meetin'−house bein' subject to rats, an' bats, an' rain, an' de bad boys of Sarsar.

I really don't see how this matter concerns *me!* cried I, though, alas! I *did* see with fatal clearness what he was after.

I wus thinkin', marster, he said, severely, dat it mought be a sort o' balm o' Gilead to your conscience to supply dat sum.

Better give him a trifle, whispered Mr. Rucker; he has great influence among the blacks.

There was no help for it. A five−dollar bill passed from my keeping into that of the parster of the Fust Methodis' Church, limited.

I began to pack my portmanteau.

What are you about? said Mr. Rucker.

About to leave your town. I can catch the night train at L − by making good speed.

So you can; but take my advice again and leave that luggage.

Leave my portmanteau? But why?

You won't be allowed to get away. The people are keeping watch. I can manage it, however. Start out with me as if for a friendly ride, and we can get on to L − with nobody the wiser; but if you start out with that carpet−sack I

won't answer for the consequences. I can send it after you in a day or so.

Again I had to submit anything to get out of the accursed place.

We mounted our horses, Mr. Rucker ostentatiously remarking that we were going out for a little ride.

You won't let him get away, Mars' Andy? cried a voice.

Have no fear, boys he is in Andy Rucker's charge! exclaimed another.

Once away from them, I thought my trials at an end. But there were yet other ordeals in store. From a cabin a shade more dingy than Mother Kane's there rushed out a fat black female, with three or four children hanging to her skirts.

Stop, stop, gentlemen! she cried, and we reined in accordingly. She laid her hand on the bridle of my horse.

Ain't you de gentleman dat killed Bud Kane? she asked.

Bud Kane's name was fast becoming the red rag to the bull.

What's that to you? roared I.

Jest this, sir these is Bud's chillern.

I wonder if there is anything or anybody in this town that Bud Kane is not in some way connected with? said I, violently. I suppose *you* want a little money to buy a black frock?

I ain't pertickeler es ter the frock, but I need the money powerful bad to help raise the chillern, fur Bud always wus mighty fond of 'em" and she too began to weep. He always said he meant ter have Julius Caesar educated. He wus de favorite, because he wus de oldest, an' de fust chile Bud ebber had. Den he made a gret pet o' Leonidas, because he wus de youngest an' prized accordin'; an' de gal Mary Margeret

Why, look here, said I, I have just seen a girl who told me she was going to marry Bud.

Yes, sir, he tole me he wus gwine ter marry. He wanted me to have him, but lor! I wouldn't marry Bud, *because he didn't belong to de church!*

I looked at Mr. Rucker. A grin convulsed his features. There was nothing to be said. I gave some money to the worthy matron, and we rode on.

At last we were well out of Sarsar, and my spirits began to rise. Suddenly we heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs coming after us at a rapid gallop.

We are pursued! said Mr. Rucker.

Let me give him a run for it, I cried.

No, no; wait here; guilt flies; you risk nothing in facing whomsoever it may be.

The pursuer turned out to be a lean little man, who introduced himself as Dr. Mellar.

I heard you were about leaving town, Mr. Merryfield, he said, briskly Merewether? excuse me and I wanted to mention to you a little bill for attendance on the negro, Bud Kane his mother being unable to pay and hearing you had a fine feeling of honor

I got down from my horse, squared my elbows, doubled my fists. Come on! said I.

Are you mad? cried the little doctor; and wheeling his horse sharply round, he fled back to Sarsar.

Before I mounted again I deliberately loaded my pistol.

This is a seven−shooter, said I to Mr. Rucker. One ball is for the undertaker, one for the grave−digger, the odd ones for any of the mourners who may wish to be paid for weeping at Bud Kane's funeral.

I think, cried Mr. Rucker, reeling slightly in his saddle, as if convulsed by some internal emotion I really think we have seen the last of them. You may shake the dust from your feet, Mr. Merewether you are out of Sarsar.

It was shortly before Christmas that this adventure befell me. Christmas−day dawned brightly, as it seemed, to all the world but me. I had no heart to go to church, feeling in no mood for the jubilant services. I was alone in the house, and when there came a ring at the bell I answered the door. There stood a remarkably tall, lithe negro man, with my portmanteau in one hand, and in the other a little covered basket.

Christmas−gift, marster! he cried.

Merry Christmas to you. You can get a glass of eggnog in the kitchen. I see you are from Sarsar. You have brought back my portmanteau.

Yes, sir. Looks like you ought to know me by name, young marster. You nearly shot my head off onct. Don't you remember Bud Kane?

Bud Kane!

Yes, sir; dat's me. Mars' Andy tole you I wus dead; but dat wus jest a joke o' his. Somebody axed him what made him act so hateful to you, an' he said onct afar wus two men standin' on de Court−house steps, an' one of 'em ups and knocks de odder off de steps; an' dey had him up fur 'salt an' battery. An' de judge says, 'What made you knock dat man offen de steps? He wus a stranger ter you, an' not a−coin' no harm.' An' de man says, 'I knows it, judge; I didn't have nothin' agin de fellow; but de truth is, *he stood so fair I couldn't help it.* '

And Bud Kane chuckled as if I would be at no loss to apply his choice anecdote.

Here's a note Mars' Andy sont you, he added.

I took the note, and read as follows:

DEAR MEREWETHER, I hope you don't bear malice. I know you will be glad that Bud Kane is *not* dead, and send this note by him to convince you of the fact. Of course tile bail business was a farce; and I return the money you so handsomely shelled out to the various claimants. And I must do myself the justice to say that I had nothing to do with Mother Kane's onslaught; that was unpremeditated and original.

It is the season of forgiveness, so don't be backward about it. And, in token of amity, accept the pups you admired we call them Prince and Pauper and give them to your sweetheart. Come again to Sarsar on a different

errand, and I promise you a better welcome from rough old

ANDY RUCKER.

You take those pups back, said I, and tell Mr. Rucker that I will accept nothing at his hands.

Yes, sir, said Bud, with a look of drollery; but can't I have my eggnog befo' I start back? Christmas−time, you know, marster.

Oh yes, have all the eggnog you want; and when you are ready to go come to me for a note I shall send to Mr. Rucker.

Bud Kane disappeared in the direction of the kitchen; and, angry, mortified, humbled in my own esteem, I set myself to the realization of how I had been duped. All the details of the fine joke just where truth ended and imposture began I should probably not know until I met Mr. Rucker. Then I promised myself an explanation and an ugly quarrel.

While I brooded over the matter the pups got out of the basket and began to frisk about the room. Then who should come in but Angie, rosy and beautiful, on her way home from church. Down she went on her knees before the little beauties in black−and−tan; and then she went into such raptures over them, and kissed them so many times, that I couldn't stand it, but offered her them and myself on the spot! She accepted the three of us; and the next thing I knew I had Angie, Prince, and Pauper in my arms, and was pressing a first kiss on her smiling lips. Pauper happened to be somewhere between her heart and mine, and in consequence was so cruelly squeezed as to give a piercing howl; but it was a rapturous moment. I loved all the world; I blessed Andy Rucker; and I forgave the Gentlemen of Sarsar!

ON THE NINE−MILE.

I. JANEY.

WHAT I said when I first come as a boarder ter Mr. Jed Burridge's house on the Nine−mile Perarer wuz that his daughter Janey would be snapped up before she wuz twenty, an' Mr. B. would hev ter look out fur another wife. But his sister, Mis' Stackley commonly called Little Mary Jane, owin' to her short height, an' to her havin' been left a widder at the age of eighteen she says ter me, I tell you, brother Jed don't want no more wives.

Land! says I, how many has he had?

One, says she, very severe, an' that one a handful. Sister Lucilly wuz a good woman, but ther' wuzn't such a driver on the perarer, an' she kep' Jed on the jump. If he come in to set down a minnit, it 'ud be 'Jed, you peel them pertaters,' or, 'Jed, tear me off some carpet rags change o' work will rest ye.' An' somehow, sence Lucilly wuz called, I've seen a kind of expression of peace steal inter Jed's face that wuzn't there o' former years.

Amos Burridge's wife spoke up, an' says she, with a laugh,

'Beneath this stone my wife cloth lie:
She is at rest, and so am I.'

Ther' ain't nothin' o' that sort on Lucilly's tombstone, says another sister o' Jed's sister Charity Hackleton, who wuz a tall lady, shaped like a camel, an' powerful religious but a nice, hullsome epitaff settin' forth the virtues

of the deceased, an' a text of Scripture appropriate.

That's neither here nor there, says Nancy Jones as wuz, who married the youngest o' the Burridge boys; but as to Janey Burridge bein' married afore she's twenty, I don't believe she will be married at all. What with her mother a−dyin' an' leavin' so much orthority in Janey's hands, the girl is plum spoiled. Ther' ain't a Sunday but the house is filled with beaux, an' she won't say yes, an' she won't say no. I don't believe in no such doin's. It's flyin' in the face o' Providence. When a girl has a good offer, she had ought ter take it.

No doubt o' that bein' your opinion, Nancy, said Mis' Amos, a−smilin' quite amiable; but, fur all that, Nancy colored up like a turkey−cock, fur folks do say that she snapped at her good offer afore ever it wuz made. But la! this is a slanderous world.

Eben will scatter the boys when he gits home, says Little Mary Jane; he ain't a−goin' ter stand the entertainin' of such a crowd.

Janey feeds her beaux high, says I, parenthetical.

Maybe that's the attraction, sniffs Nancy Jones as wuz.

Don't you believe it, cries Amos B.'s wife, very prompt. It's Janey herself they are after. An' no wonder. She's as smart as a steel−trap, an' as pretty as a young pullet. She can pick an' choose.

Some folks' incinerations, says Nancy, very furious, is about as nasty as this here wool we are a−pickin' out.

It wuz at a wool−pickin' we wuz conversin', an' about this time I had to leave, though very reluctant, as I did enjoy a reg'lar set−to between Janey Burridge's aunts. Git 'em together, an' they use' ter make me think of a line of poetry in my readin'−book at school:

An Austrian army awfully arrayed!

They were free an' loud of voice as a pack of hounds, an' when they didn't agree the din wuz tremenjus. Ther' wuz four of 'em, two bein' Burridges by birth, an' two havin' married inter the family. Certainly ther' wuz no porcity of aunts to look after Janey, but as if enough wuzn't as good as a feast, she always called me aunt too. I wuz no blood−kin to the child, but my husband wuz connected in a roundabout way with some o' the Burridges, so I wuz Aunt Fonie to most o' the young folks, an' I wuz that fussless in my natur' that I got on peaceable with the hull lot, though the aunts wuz as tryin' as seven years' aguy, an' Janey would make a sassy speech occasional. Fur instance, the day o' the wool−pickin', when I got home she wuz leanin' on the gate a−chattin' ter Roland Selph, who had been cock o' the walk on the perarer sence he got religion in the spring. Janey's sleeves wuz rolled up ter the shoulders, an' her arms wuz all dough, a− showin' she had jest left her bread in the pan to rise or fall as the Lord willed. Bread an' beaux, says I to her, speakin' mild but impressive, has both to be treated with attention; but the Queen of England, says I no, nor the Sar of Russia couldn't 'tend to the two simultaneous.

Well, Aunt Fonie, cries Janey, if a person can't do two things at onct, what makes you think you can manage your business an' mine too?

I won't deny that my feelin's wuz hurt. People ought ter be mighty careful what they say ter an isolate female whose partner is a−restin' with the worms.

But somehow I never could stay mad with Janey. She wuz such a cheerful person to have around: somethin' eternally goin' on wher' she wuz. She wuz as good as a breeze among leaves to set things a−goin'; an' she could

turn out more work in a day than most of us in a week. She wuz powerful good−lookin' too, Janey wuz, with crisp black hair, cheeks like apples, an' a big, laughin' mouth full o' white teeth, that she akchilly thought as much of as if they wuz diamonds.

II. EBEN BURRIDGE COMES HOME.

Nobody don't consider a boy of much account. And I don't say but that little Elick Farley had a hard time of it at the farm. He wuz a child that Mr. Burridge had took out of charity a son of a distant niece of his, who had married a young man by the name of Alexander Farley, from St. Louis.

It wuz the sort of marriage that the song of Dixie tells about:

Ole mis' she acted a foolish part
She married a man dat broke her heart.

Not that Lex Farley meant ter be a bad man. He wuz kind, and could make money hand over hand in the photographin' line when he wanted to. But drink seemed ter have a lien on him, an' he would spree in the awfullest way, always insistin', when the fit wuz on him, that he should be called General Harrison. What the p'int of this idea was nobody ever could exactly see, except that it seemed a sort o' pride o' natur' comin' out even when he wuz at the lowest pitch. But he carrid on so ridickerlous in his spells that his wife's spirits seemed to wear out. She wuz always weakly, an' she up an' died. The only spark o' fun that wuz ever in the poor girl showed itself on her dyin' bed.

I think, says she, smilin' very pitiful I do think I might git up agen, if it wuzn't fur Then she stopped a long while.

If it wuzn't for what, Effie? asks a neighbor.

Fur General Harrison, she whispers, very gentle.

After her death, Jed Burridge took her boy to bring him up on the farm, out o' the reach o' temptation. Elick wuz a wild flitter−gibbet, always a−needin' to be kept down, but a real worker fur his age.

One of his chores wuz to go to the post−office. Most o' the folks on the perarer wuz mighty neglectful as to mail matter, trustin' usually to the chance of some neighbor inquirin' fur 'em, or lettin' it run on indefinite; but Jed Burridge always would keep up with things, bein' a man very advanced in his notions. Once every week reg'lar, rain or shine, Elick was sent in to the office; most ginerally Saturday evenin's, so as Jed could git his paper, the Toledo Blade, fur Sunday readin'. He didn't git to church frequent, but set up an' chuckled an' swore alternate over that paper; fur it wuz as hot as ginger, an' Jed, though a powerful peaceful man, agreed with it all, an' rolled out politics like smoke if a Democrat dropped in fur an argeyment.

On a special Saturday Elick fetched home a letter from Eben Burridge to his pa, sayin' we might expect him by the 15th which wuz the following Sunday. Eben had been out in Kansas fur a couple o' years, seekin' a place to locate. It seemed he hadn't found one, however, fur the next day he arrove at home, like Duffey after the third round, confident an' smilin', as pompous an' self−satisfied a little man as ever I see. After dinner the boys came a−droppin' in as usual, an' what does he do but take the'r visits to hisself! When Janey come to the sittin'−room door to bid 'em to supper, ther' wuz as many as a dozen, lookin' at each other like gawks, but all very perlite to Eben, wantin' to curry favor with Janey.

Now, I take this as kind, boys, says Eben, quite affable, as we set round the table, that you should all come so soon to see me. It takes the old perarer fur good fellows. I tell you, out yonder in Kansas it's scramble, scramble, an' everybody a−suspicionin' of everybody. If ther' wuz a conflaggeration of a neighbor's house, every man would be a−crowdin' in ter see what he could git fur hisself in the way o' pelf, instead o' helpin' to save a sufferin' fellow−creetur's goods.

Sho, says Amos Burridge, we ain't that bad, though neither air we what we use' ter be. Fifty years ago, when I settled here, you might talk. There wuzn't a merkenary man among us. No pullin' an' haulin' an' cat−scratchin' ter git ahead. Pervide enough ter eat fur yourself an' your stock, an' you could ride aroun' the balance o' the time.

I'm sure ther's a−plenty of visitin' nowadays, says I, likin' always to hear my bob in conversation.

'Tain't the same kind. Folks drop in, ter be sure; but then they went fur a stayin' spell. The doors wuz made of split boards two or three inches too short, an' when you left home all you hed to do wuz ter throw a quilt over the top, an' then folks would know you wuz out, an' wouldn't holler.

Mighty funny way ter make a door! says Elick Farley.

Ther' wuz no winders, don't you see. Not a pane o' glass on the Nine−mile. I remember the first man that hed any made half his front door of glass; an' it wuz a sort o' guide: so many miles east or west o' the cabin with the glass door, folks would say.

Wonder what they say about our house? says Elick, stuffin' a laugh inter his throat with a piece of bread. Reckon they talk about t'other side o' wher' Janey Black−Eyes lives.

Hold your jaw! says Eben, fetchin' Elick a awful tweak o' the ear.

Elick squeals out: Ho! you stuck−up Kansas grasshopper! Think the fellows come ter see you, do you? Ain't got sense enough to know they're after Janey! They didn't know you wuz looked fur. They comes every Sunday o' the world. Ho! ho! and you thought you wuz so pretty that you drawed the whole squad! Ef that ain't a joke I never!

Them young men turned every color, from a pea−green to a grizzly gray. An' Eben looked red and furious from one ter another.

Is this so? says he, glarin' round. Is it Janey you've come ter set up with?

As luck would have it, he looked straight at Roland Selph, an' Roland sence he got religion had swore off from tellin' lies, though the boys wuz always tryin' to git him in a tight place where he couldn't speak the truth without a−hurtin' somebody's feelin's.

Howsomever, Roland laughed, good−humored, an' says he, Wher' ther's honey you must look for flies, Eben.

Yes, says Eben, very significant, an' lookin' as if he would like to bite somethin', and wher' ther's flies you can look out fur fly−pizen. What have you to say fur yourself, Charley Winn?

I have ter say that I come a−courtin' Janey, says Mr. Winn, as bold as brass; an' she can take me or leave me any day she says the word.

Brother Eben, cries Janey, her face afire, I wish you wuz back in Kansas, that I do.

Very well, says Eben, quite majestic, I relieve you of my company fur the present. An' out he stalks, puffin' like a mad gobbler.

Boys, we'd better git our hats, says Albert Thing.

They got up, and every last one of 'em slips away like a whip−tailed hound.

Janey burst out a−cryin', without waitin' to wash up the supper things.

Of all the mean sneaks that ever wuz born, Ebenezer Burridge, you are the worst, she said.

Do you want your par eat out of house an' home?

Well, on my word! to count company's eatin'!

I should say so! A supper spread out fit fur a preacher! Two dishes of fresh, an' apple butter, an' a stack o' pies, an' dear knows what! I'll stand nothin' of the sort in my house.

Easy, my boy, easy, says his par. This property belongs to old Jed Burridge yet a while.

Well, it's a−goin' to be mine by the law of primogenicy, says Eben, very grand; an' all I have to say is, that if Jane wants ter marry, she's got to pick one outen the crowd, an' turn the rest off. My foot is down.

La, Eben! says I, it's so hard for Janey to choose. She's the most popperler girl on the perarer.

Popperler! yells Eben. An' what business has a decent woman to be popperler? Let her be popperler with her husband, an' that's enough. I've saw your popperler women I haven't travelled with my eyes shut an' I tell you they've got no more character than stale eggs.

The words wuzn't well spoke afore up jumped Janey an' give him such a slap as might have been heard to the wheat field. Then she tore off like a cyclone to her room.

Eben wuz in a blazin' rage; but his par he on'y laughed a little, and Ain't she got sperrit? says he. Ain't she, though? Then a sort of shade came over his face, and She do put me so much in mind of her mother, he said, a−knockin' the ashes out of his pipe.

III. JANEY MAKES A CHOICE.

It didn't surprise any of us, a few weeks later, when Janey told her par that she meant to marry Charley Winn; fur he had been comin' alone quite frequent, an' he an' Janey had set up in the parlor, not findin' much ter say.

I ain't no objection to Charley, says Jed, an' I shall give Janey fifty geese an' ten sheep an' a cow.

Charley's goin' ter build, par, says Janey three rooms an' a ell. It will be real nice beginnin' all fresh.

Everybody seemed to think Janey had done well, and most had a warm word fur her. The aunts would try to fault Charley occasional, but they couldn't git the best o' Janey; an' neither could Eben when he fussed with her about wantin' to take so much o' the furniture out o' the house.

It wuz my mother's furniture, says she, an' I mean ter have it.

Well, wozn't she my mother too? snarls Eben. D'ye think you have got a patent on her? Ther' won't be a thing left in the house for me and my girl to set up with.

Neither one of 'em appeared to consider the old father as they wrangled over his things. I made up my mind, if Janey did make a clean sweep, I should unpack some of my own goods that I had stored in Peppertown, an' bring 'em over; for though a boarder I wuz human, an' my feelin's went out to Jed settin' there so peaceful, with his pipe an' his white head.

Charley Winn lost no time in gettin' his house put up, an' a good job it wuz neat an' nice as a palace, with a bay−window an' plenty o' closets. Every evenin' Janey would go over to see how it wuz gittin' along, an' Charley would walk home with her, both of 'em lookin' as proud an' as pleased as if the whole o' the comin' wheat crop belonged to 'em. The weddin' wuz to be just after harvestin', that bein' a time when everybody took a restin' spell. Janey's weddin' frock wuz bein' made in Peppertown, an' Jed had made her a present of a whole bolt of domestic that we wuz makin' up as fast as possible. He wuz a mighty liberal man, Jed wuz, an' Janey's aunts said that her outfittin' would be the ruin of every girl on the perarer.

The wheat crop this year wuz a very stavin' one, and the farmers had considerable difficulty in gittin' help.

I reckon you'll have to ride the reaper to−morrow, Janey, says Eben, one night at supper, if you can spare the time.

All right, she said. My work can wait, an' the wheat can't. It's already overripe.

I don't see how you can be so venturesome as to ride on the reaper, says I.

Janey is an old hand at helpin' in the crop, says her pa. When she wuzn't more'n half the size o' Elick here she rid the leadin' horse when we wuz a−thrashin' out the wheat.

Why, uncle, didn't you have a thrashin'−machine? cries Elick, stickin' his knife between his teeth, an' proddin' a piece o' pork with his fork, simultaneous with stretchin' out his other hand for a biscuit.

Machines wuz locked up then in some man's brain, says Jed; an' sometimes I wish they had never got out, fur it gives a poor man's pocket−book the swinney to buy one. The way we thrashed wuz to set the bundles in a ring about forty feet in diameter, I cal'late, an' ride around it, the horses' feet a−trampin' out the grain. An' when it wuz pretty well out we would sweep it up in a cloth.

I should think it would 'a been awful unclean.

Well, our biscuits wuz gritty sometimes, says Jed, with a smile.

Long before sun−up the next mornin' Ebenezer gave us a call, for at harvest−time the sooner you could git things to goin' the better. In fact, durin' a very dry season, when the sun shone down hot an' fierce, an' the wheat wuz as brittle as broom straws, an' it wuz a sheer impossibility to bundle it without breakin', then the men would often have to work all night, so's ter take advantage o' the dew. 'Twan't no great hardship, however, with the big yellow harvest−moon a−shinin' in the sky, an' the air so cool an' pleasant. But it wuz powerful apt to bring on the chills.

When Janey jumped out o' bed at Eben's call she said she had a pain in her left eye, and wuz afeared she wuz goin' ter have a sty, to which she wuz subject occasional. We had a piece o' broken lookin'−glass in our room, an' takin' it in her hand, Janey went to the winder to examine her eye where she could ketch the first beam o' light. While she stood there, as evil doom would have it, Elick Farley passed by on his way ter feed the turkeys.

Hi, Janey! he calls, you'd better come down−stairs an' git the breakfast, instid of a−primpin' an' a−fixin' an' a−lookin' in the glass as if you wuz goin' to a party.

You go about your business an' let me alone, says Janey firin' up a little.

Then what does he do but commence a−dancin' up an' down, an' a−singin':

Janey's mad, an' I am glad,
An' I know what'll please her
A bottle o' wine ter make her shine,
An' Charley Winn to squeeze her.

At this Janey turned real ugly. See if I can't make you change your tune, she cries. And without a moment's thought, I am sure, she flung the piece o' lookin'−glass square at Elick's head. It struck him on the forehead, an' he began to bleed and howl simultaneous. We ran down, considerably skeered; but the cut didn't turn out to be much, an' wuz soon salved and bound up. Elick's feelin's, however, wuz all agog. Many a black look he cast at Janey.

I'll be even with you yet, says he, an' you mark my words. But Janey on'y humped up her shoulders at him, an' went along to the wheat field.

Reapin' is hungry work, an' our harvesters could put away four meals a day quite comfortable. So along about eleven o'clock I fixed up a lunch of cold biscuit an' pork an' hoecake, an' a jug of cool buttermilk, an' went ter the field with it. Fur though I wuz a boarder, I wuz never above doin' any little chores to help the work along.

I got to the field just as the reaper wuz comin' up. Janey wuz sittin' up high under the awnin' drivin', an' Charley Winn stood beside her, a−tyin' up the bundles very swift. Eben wuz stackin' up in a distant part o' the field, an' his par had stopped to rest under a big walnut−tree which wuz a sort o' landmark to people in those parts, it bein' the tallest tree on the Nine−mile, an' wuz ginerally known as Burridge's walnut. Here they gethered ter eat their lunch.

Phew! but it's a hot day! says Jed, takin' a long pull at the buttermilk, an' passin' the jug to Charley Winn.

The wheat field is a mighty purty sight, says I; for it wuz, with the yellow sun shinin' on the yellow waves o' grain, an' the path that the reaper had made lookin' as smooth an' clean an' hare as the dry line through the Red Sea.

I don't know about purty, says Jed, but it's as fine a stand of wheat as I ever had. Not a spear of cheat in it. An' this one good year the Hessian fly an' the chinch−bug has let us alone.

Ther' ain't a farmer in the country as can compare with you, Mr. Burridge, says Charley Winn. I only hope to have half as good−luck when I am tryin' it single−hand.

Sho! you'll have Janey ter help you. She's as good a farmer as I am. I allays said Janey ought ter 'a bin the boy an' Eben the girl in our family. Eben has a picayunish, meachin' sort o' way with him as is nateral to women. His mother hed it, went on the old man, quite thoughtful, an' chewin' a wheat straw. But Janey is another sort, active an' strong, an' muscles like steel.

Oh, I love ter work out−doors, cries Janey. I can do a'most anything that a man can. I don't know what I should do if I had to stay shut up in the house.

I believe you could throw me in a rassel, says Charley. What a muscle, ter be sure! an' he give her arm a squeeze.

Janey tossed her head, an' colored up, an' laughed a big, saucy laugh. Gracious! if any one had told me that I would never again hear that laugh, never see her standin', strong an' vigorous as a young oak, an' red as a poppy bloom, in the golden grain, with her sweetheart by her side! Well, well! a body may jest as well give up soon as late a−tryin' ter understand the ways of Providence!

They set off again, Janey still a−drivin', an' I started fur home. As I reached the bars I turned an' looked back. The reaper wuz cuttin' against the wind. Janey's bonnet wuz off, an' her black hair wuz blowin' over her face. Suddenly I saw a little sunbeam dancin' about the head of old Pete, the right−hand horse. He shook his head, annoyed like; but the little patch of light went bobbin', bobbin', here an' there, glancin' in eyes, ears, an' nose, quick as a hummin'−bird, an' finally flashin' full in the eyes of Nelly Grey, the little mare, that wuz a−drivin' with old Pete. The skittish thing give an awful jump. The next minnit both frightened animals had started off on a run, *an' Janey, poor Janey, wuz thrown forward in front of the sickle bar!* Great Heaven! what a time it seemed before the horses could be overtook an' halted! How I got to the spot I never could tell. When I did, ther' wuz Ebenezer holdin' to the pantin', tremblin' horses, that wuz rollin' the'r eyes as if in a mortal fright. An' Charley an' Jed wuz tryin' to lift somethin' from the knives, red with blood, an' the pointed guards clogged with mangled flesh. They got her out, and laid her down on the ground. Charley went over to the house, an' came back with a door that he had wrenched off, an' we managed to git her on this, knowin' only by a faint moanin' that the breath wuz still in the poor torn body.

Eben an' Jed crept across the field with the'r burden, while Charley jumped on Nelly Grey an' rid like mad fur the doctor.

I walked a little behind, feelin' stunned an' dazed; an' as I passed under Burridge's walnut I heard a voice callin', Aunt Fonie!

I looked up. A pair of wild eyes peered at me through the branches.

Aunt Fonie, called Elick, is she dead?

Come down outen that tree, Elick Farley! says I, very solemn.

Down he slid, the most miserable, God−forsakened little wretch. He had cried white streaks down his cheeks, an' he wuz a−shakin' all over. *In his hand be held a bit of broken looking−glass.*

What does this mean? says I.

I did it, he says, very pitiful. I wanted to tease her because I wuz mad, an' wanted to pay her off a little. I knew she never could guess that I wuz hid up in the tree catchin' the sunbeam with the same piece of glass that she struck me with. But I didn't mean to hurt her. I never dreamed o' her bein' thrown on them them knives.

Elick Farley, says I, takin' him hard by the hand, come here;" and I followed the men that wuz a−carryin' poor Janey.

Look! says I look! and along the path wuz a line o' drippin' blood.

Pray, says I, burstin' inter tears pray to the good God that that stain shell not rest forever on your soul.

The child give a wild cry that seemed as if it had fairly burst from his heart; then tearin' away from me, he ran like a dart across the perarer, in the direction of Peppertown.

IV. JANEY'S COMFORTERS.

Fur many a draggin' week poor Janey lay betwixt life an' death. The child wuz cut an' bruised over every part of her body. Two of her ribs wuz broke, an' one limb had been impaled on the guards of the sickle, an' wuz nearly sawed in two. That she should so much as survive the shock an' horrid wounds seemed a miracle; but the doctor brought her round at last, though he told her quite frank she would never be able ter walk again.

Never ter walk again! said Janey, flingin' her arms over her head, with a long, long groan never ter walk again! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!

The aunts wuz all a−settin' round very solemn, an' they sithed an' rocked themselves back an' forth like trees in a wind.

It's the Lords will, says sister Charity Hackleton; an' mebbe it's sent es a punishment fur your sins.

That's all nonsense, says Janey, very dogged like. What sins have I committed, I want ter know? I've worked hard, an' done my best; an' beyond a sharp word now an' then, I've nothin' on my conscience. I don't deserve this.

We all deserve damnation, says Charity, severe as a Hard−shell preacher. Let this turn your soul to God, an' it will prove a blessin' in disguise.

Sho! says Mis' Amos Burridge; ther' ain't no use tryin' ter bolster the poor child up with such talk es that. It's a terrible misfortin terrible. It's jest es if she had jumped from twenty years to eighty from bein' a strong young girl to a helpless old woman, needin' es much care es a baby, an' sufferin' perhaps fur a drink o' water even; because a family do git so wore out waitin' on a invaleed.

In *my* family, says I, ther' would a' bin no thought o' trouble. We wuzn't the kind ter count our steps fur the afflicted. Consequently, when my husband's mother wuz down with the rheumatism fur years an' years, her room wuz about the cheerfulest in the house fur everybody wuz a−runnin' to her with some lovin' service an' the Visitation o' the Sick read quite frequent to enliven us.

Never mind all that, says Little Mary Jane, with a wave of her little fat hand. Let us be practical. The thing is ter find somethin' fur Janey ter do. I cal'late she don't mean ter lie round all her days a burden on folks, so I've bin a−studyin' an' a−studyin' what she could do. Now, I take it she couldn't do nothin' better than ter buy a knittin'−machine. She could pervide mittens an' socks fur the whole country, fur everybody would buy of her on account of her affliction; an' thusly she could have ockerapation an' a stiddy income.

Knittin'−machines cost a sight o' money, says Amos Burridge's wife, very dry. Who's goin' ter pay fur it?

She might sell her geese fur a start.

An' her relations might all throw in an' help, says I.

At this there wuz a sort o' silence. Never a Burridge by name or by birth wuz ever willin' to put his hand in his pocket.

Well, says Nancy Jones as wuz, some has to *be* burdens, an' some to *bear* 'em. I'm one o' the last, an' I don't

know but what I'm the worse off o' the two of us. Twins the first year o' my marriage, an' a baby ten months after! I am fairly dragged out with nursin', an' I suppose I shell have a baby in my arms es long es I am able to move.

That's somethin' Janey will never be troubled with, anyhow, says Mis' Amos, with a laugh, as if she wuz sayin' somethin' of a soothin' an' agreeable natur'. So far from that bein' the case, however, it seemed as if that speech wuz the last straw. I had noticed fur some time a sort of convulsive movement under the bedclothes, as if Janey's breast wuz a−heavin' with silent sobs, an' now ther' came a storm o' tears an' cries, as if natur' had bore an' bore until a flood came fur relief.

I jest riz up then, an' says I: Clear out from here, you onfeelin' set o' human critters! If I didn't have no more decency than you've got, I'd go an' hold my head under Big Muddy Creek.

They wuz skeered at the state they see they'd throwed Janey inter, so they filed out pretty meek. I took the poor child, an' worked with her, an' made her drink some hot tea an' take a good strengthenin' dose of quineen; an' after a while she grew quiet, an' the big moans stopped comin' from the poor breast where a child's head would never rest, an' she fell inter a sweet sleep.

Afore I thought her nap wuz over Eben's head wuz poked in the door. Says he, Charley Winn's here, an' would like ter see Janey.

Well, he can't, says I, very short, fur she is asleep.

I am awake now, Aunt Fonie, says a voice from the bed. An' Charley may come in as soon as you've tidied me up a bit.

Pretty soon we heard his step on the stair. Janey wuz tremblin', but she shook hands with him quite calm when he came in, an' she says, You go out, Aunt Fonie; I want to talk to Charley by himself.

But, dear sakes! I had no notion of effacin' myself, so I stepped outside o' the door, leavin' it ajee, an' a−settin' myself where I could look an' listen quite comfortable.

Janey day there, her big eyes fixed on Charley's face. He stood up, twirlin' his hat, first on one foot, then on the other, an' lookin' powerful meachin', fur a fact.

Charley, begun poor Janey, it's hard to come to this.

I'd like to kill that little devil! cried Charley.

Oh no, don't say that. Poor child! you know he ran away to his pa: you remember Lex Farley? Lex wrote a letter ter my father, expressin' a great deal o' concern. He said it seemed as if Elick's heart wuz fairly broke. Maybe he'll make a good man yet.

If he gits ter be the President, I don't see how that's ter make up ter me fur losin' you.

A−losin' me? repeats Janey, very slow. But I ain't dead, Charley, nor like ter die, the doctor says.

That hat went round in Charley's fingers as if it wuz possessed. But you know, Janey, he stammered you know, a man hes to marry a woman ter do her shear o' the work. And you can't do anything.

True, says Janey, speakin' very loud an' harsh, I'm laid on the shelf. An' of course a man marries a woman ter have his meals cooked reg'lar, an' the harvestin' 'tended to, an' the lard tried out, an' the apple−butter made, an' the

geese plucked, an' the house cleaned, an' the washin' done on Monday, an' the mendin' Saturday, an' the odd jobs on Sunday.

Exactly, says he, noddin' his head, an' never mistrustin' the gawk! that any woman with feelin's above a dumb beast's would 'a liked fur her beau to add a little tenderness to that bill of pertikelers.

Janey swallered a few times, an' then said, quite nateral, Of course, Charley, you will be marryin' some one else before a great while?

Oh yes, he says. My house is built, you know, an' I've already got my seed in that fifty−acre lot. I shell have to git me a wife by next harvest−time, you know.

An' have you made up your mind, says Janey, very polite, where you'll go a−courtin' next time?

Don't talk to me about a man havin' any gumption! Charley Winn seemed quite pleased that Janey wuz takin' intrust in his marryin', an' says he, in a sociable kind o' way, as if he had been talkin' to his grandmother, I have been thinkin' of Mahaly Thing.

She's powerful untidy, says Janey. They say she washes her hands an' makes up her bread in the same bowl. An' I know her kitchen is the sloppiest on the Nine−mile.

What do you think of Hatty Holman?

Oh, she would do, says Janey, speakin' quite dry, if you could keep two hired girls one to do the work, an' one to wait on her. She's as lazy as a snail.

Well, ther's Evy Wait; she appears to be of a brisk, active natur'.

So much so that they say she can drink more hard cider than any girl on the perarer.

Charley knit up his brows, ant looked as if the subject wuz gittin' very knotty.

Suppose I wuz to ask one o' the Whiteside girls? he suggested; they are purty, and smart too.

Oh yes; and they'll give a kiss for the askin' to you or the next one that comes along.

I don't like that, says Charley, very stern. None o' your fast flirts fur me! That's what I use' ter like about you, Janey. Every fellow hed to keep his distance. Now, the Biscoe girls are of a very proper kind. Wonder how it would do fur me to apply there?

Jenny is engaged to Roland Selph; an' as fur Leila, she wouldn't wipe her shoes on a Western wheat farmer.

An' es to Polly Ann Carpenter?

She is a waster. She can throw out with a teaspoon faster than a man can bring in with a shovel.

I declare, Janey, said Charley, seemin' quite injured, it looks es if you don't want me ter git a wife. You try to set me agen every girl on the perarer. 'Pears like you can't bear to give me up to anybody else.

You are quite mistaken, Mr. Winn, cries poor Janey, her voice risin' higher with every word *quite* mistaken, I do assure you. I've no objection to your havin' forty wives. You might go to Utah an' join the Mormons; then

you could try all kinds, you know ha! ha! ha! ha!

When I heard this wild laughin' I knew it wuz time to walk in with the camphor bottle in hand.

I think you hed better make yourself scarce, says I to Charley Winn, with a very viperish look. Pickin' up his hat, he sneaked out o' the room, an' out o' Janey Burridge's life. An' I may jest as well mention that it wuzn't six months afore he wuz married to Mahaly Thing.

V. UNEXPECTED THINGS HAPPEN TO JANEY.

Janey didn't seem ter git any better as the days passed on. She took no intrust in anything in the heavens above nor in the earth beneath. The doctor said he couldn't do no more fur her, en' except to make her pretty deef, all the quineen she took didn't have a mite of effect. Seein' her so dwindlin' an' pinin', I set my wits ter work. The child ought ter have somethin' to engage her time an' her mind. An' Little Mary Jane's idea as to the knittin'−machine wuz fur from bein' a injudishus one. How to git the purchase−money wuz the trouble. The thought come to me that Lex Farley might jest as well as not help in the matter; so I wrote him a letter on my own hook, as the sayin' is, an' presented the case. By the next Saturday came an answer sayin' he would be proud ter git the machine out an' out for Janey, but fur me to say nothin' about it till it had arrove. In the same mail wuz a letter ter me from poor little Elick, a−sayin' thusly:

DEAR AUNT FONIE, Pa has swore off till he gits Janey's machine. I am a−helpin' him, an' learnin' the photographin' business very fast. Give my respex ter Janey. I am very sorry that she got hurt. Yours truely, E. FARLEY.

Seems ter me you're gittin' a lot o' letters, says Eben when he handed 'em to me; but I only smiled mysterious, an' said not a word.

I never had seen Janey so low as she wuz the day before Thanksgivin'. I wuz bustlin' round preparin' fur nex' day's dinner, but she barely raised her eyelids from her cheeks. What hev I ter be thankful fur? she would say when I would try to hearten her up somewhat.

Before night, however, Janey took back them words o' hens; fur old Mr. Thing, passin' by on his way from town, stopped with a box outen the express office directed to Miss Janey Burridge.

Fur me! cries Janey, very incredulous, but her eyes sparklin' as I hadn't seen 'em since her accident.

We all assembled while Jed knocked off the wooden slats an' untied the strings; fur, be the hurry what it may, the man wuz that careful that cut a string he would not.

An' lo an' behold! there wuz the prettiest knittin'−machine ever made, with a card:

Compliments and Resects
of
Alexander Farley
to
Miss Janey Burrirdge.

Janey wuz pleased enough ter cry, an' I don't believe she slept a wink that night fur longin' ter try her hand on the little beauty. The aunts didn't lose no time in comin' over to the house as soon as they got wind o' Janey's present. An' sister Charity, who understood how to work machines, offered to stay a week, if need be, to put Janey in the

way o' runnin' hers; which showed she wuzn't a bad kind o' woman, in spite o' bein' so aggressive in the way o' religion.

From that time Janey's health an' spirits improved considerable. She turned out mittens an' socks very fast; an' the very first pair wuz sent as a present to Lex Farley. As fur me, seein' how well my idea had worked, an' though not as a rule approvin' of ridin' a willin' horse to death, still I thought, while his hand was in, Lex might as well as not lay up more treasures in heaven. So I up an' wrote another letter, sayin' that if Janey had a wheel−cheer, it would be the greatest thing in the world fur her to ease her pain, an' enable her ter git about. No answer came to this; but I waited patient, thinkin' somethin' might come of it. An' ther' did.

Christmas had come, an' we all had bundled up in the big wagon, an' gone over ter Amos Burridge's to dinner except, of course, poor Janey, who wuz left in the charge of one o' the neighbors' children, little Sally Wysnicker, with a nice dinner ready cooked for 'em, and set out in the dresser.

The day wore along as them family spreads usually do, an' about four o'clock we started fur home. Now, it's a very curious thing, but as we reached the corner o' Mr. Burridge's wheat field, I had the most flutterin' sensation erbout the heart, es if somethin' wuz a−goin' ter happen. It wouldn't hev surprised me a mite ter hev found the house burnt up, fur I felt the same way twice previous in my life once precedin' to our Jersey cow bein' gored, an' agin before my partner wuz taken with the dropsy that carrid him off. Howsomever, ther' wuz the house safe an' sound; an' es we neared the gate the wind bore the sound of laughin' to our ears. Very cur'ous, we hurried on; but afore we got to the door out broke a boy, all dressed up, clean as clean, an' a−shoutin' at the top of his voice, Howdy, Aunt Fonie! howdy, Uncle Jed! howdy, Eben! Christmas−gift! Christmas−gift!

Of course it wuz Elick. An' of course the slim, long−bearded man we see through the winder a−talkin' so kindly ter Janey wuz Elick's par, Lex Farley. But the wonder of all wuz ter see Janey. There she wuz, bright an' smilin', *an' a−sittin' up* in the finest kind o' wheeled cheer, es proud es if she wuz on a throne.

Well, we wuz all a−talkin' together fur quite a spell; an' Jed he welcomed Lex real hearty, an' told him he must make himself at home fur es long es he would like ter stay. An' you never see a boy so changed as Elick Farley. From bein' a wild, cantankerous limb that nobody hardly could abide, he wuz a quiet, nice little chap, modest an' obligin' in his ways, an' a−hangin' on every word that Janey spoke.

It wuz all I could do ter git him ter come, said his par, when he got a chance fur a word with me. You see he thought Janey would be so set agen him that she would want ter hev him arrested or somethin'; but I told him ter be a man, an' face the music. When we got inside the hall door here, an' see Janey lookin' so white an' quiet, as if she might be dead, the child hung back as if he darsn't go a step farther. But I pushed him inside the room, an' he begun ter cry. Janey turned her head quick, an' seen him a−standin' ther'. Somehow she didn't seem a bit surprised. 'Elick,' says she, very gentle 'Elick, come here;' an' when he wuz in reach she put her arms around him an' kissed him.

No! I cried, Janey Burridge didn't ever do that!

Yes, he said, strokin' his beard, kind o' meditative, she kissed him. An' I suppose it's the first time anybody hes kissed him sence his mother died. An' that she should do it who lay there a wreck through his mischief! I tell you, Aunt Fonie, she is a angel.

It hed never occurred ter me ter look on Janey Burridge in that light, as you ain't apt to think of a angel bein' strong as a heifer, an' built for labor rusher than a−flyin' roun' an' singin'; but I wuz glad ter hev Lex Farley appreshiate her, even though he stretched the blanket a little in doin' so.

After supper Mr. Burridge examined the cheer most admirin'. It wuz made of cherry−wood, an' stuffed with hair, an' set on springs, an' covered with rep, an' it wuz es fine es a coffin.

It must 'a cost a sight o' money, says Jed.

A matter o' fifty dollars, says Lex Farley; but you know, Uncle Jed, I don't ever find it difficult to make money.

True, Lex, says the old man, very kind; you are smart enough ter do anything when you give the enemy the go−by.

I wuz a little skeert at this plain−speakin', fearin' Lex might take offence; but he spoke out quite manful: Uncle Jed, I haven't teched a drop of anything stronger than tea sence my boy come in an' told me what hed happened to Janey. I made up my mind that instant that ef the poor girl wuz gone, I would pay all the funeral expenses, an' put her up a handsome monument; an' ef she lived, that I would come to see her, an' try to make such poor reparation es I could.

I'm sure, says Jed, that Janey will set more value on your lettin' the drink alone than on either the knittin'−machine or the wheel−cheer. You see, it runs in our blood ter be gret on temperance. Forty year ago, when the Burridges first settled here, one of our first performances wuz ter git up a temperance meetin' at Peppertown. The Yahoos came in an' tried ter put a stop to it.

The Yahoos? An' who were they?

That wuz the name we give the early settlers. They wuz mostly riffraff o' the hardest sort, who hed drifted here from Tennessee an' Kentucky. They wuz dead−set agin temperance. They came a−whoopin' an' a−ridin' an' a−yellin' inter Peppertown on the occasion of our meetin'; an' they hed caught a wild wolf, which they turned loose among the folks, an' nearly skeered the women ter death.

In them days even the preachers hated ter give up the'r whiskey. Well, it wuz a heap purer article than you git now; you could buy it by the barrel at a bit a gallon. Everybody drunk it. It wuz handed around ter women an' children. At the races once old Mrs. Wysnicker had a barrel that she peddled out by the drink, an' they said she made enough ter buy a handsome family Bible.

I wish they would give us a purer article of whiskey in these days, said Mr. Farley.

Lex Lex Farley, don't say that! cried Janey, leanin' for'ard, en' speakin' with such entreaty as I never heerd from mortal lips.

You have gone without it, she says, from sorrow an' pity fur me, an' you can keep on in the good course fur love fur love of God. Listen to me, Lex. You wuz pleased with my thanks when I told you how the knittin'−machine had comforted me an' give me a new start in life; an' you smiled an' almost cried too when I told you ter−day of the rest your beautiful cheer give to my poor tired body. Think, think what it will be when you can bring the gifts of a good an' manly life ter the Lord, an' receive his thanks, an' know his joy over the one sinner that repents! Oh, Lex, don't give me more than you give to your Maker!

It came like a thunder−clap. I never would 'a believed Janey Burridge could have spoke so beautiful. We wuz all moved beyond speech. But, after a−little, Lex Farley says: I won't forgit your words, Janey. God bless you fur 'em!

Jed passed his hand across his eyes. My friends, said he, it is Christmas night. Let us unite in prayer.

An' kneelin' round Janey's cheer, we prayed in silence, an' somethin' seemed ter whisper that a good new year wuz a−dawnin' fur us all.

Well, well, Lex Farley wuz in no hurry to git away. An' one day he asked our Janey to marry him.

He says, Aunt Fonie, said Janey to me, that I can *help* him I, a poor lame creature, that never expected to be of use or pleasure ter any livin' soul.

He loves you, dear, I said, pattin' her dark head.

I can hardly believe it, she said, in a falterin' way. He says so many strange things, Aunt Fonie: that to be with me helps an' heartens him; that he wants nothin' better than to work for me all his days; that he wants me only to give him my heart not my labor an' service, but my heart.

'Ther's nothin' half so sweet in life
As love's young dream,'

says I, quotin' out of a poetry book.

Don't you think, says she, very timid, that folks will say he wanted me from pity, an' that I took him from pride?

Fools may, says I, very decisive.

The end of it all wuz that she put him off six months, durin' which time he wuz as sober as a horse, an' then she married him. They went ter St. Louis ter live, an' he got a run o' fashionable customers, an' soon we heard of 'em as surprisin' prosperous. A couple o' years later her par an' me went ter visit 'em; fur I hed got rusher tired o' bein' a boarder an' hed married Jed Burridge. That wuz a visit! They hed three rooms leadin' out o' the photograph gallery an apartment, they called it an' a servant to do the work, an' a little maid to 'tend the door. Lex Farley was the proudest, happiest man in the State. For Janey bless her! with a long trailed gown on, her face pale and pretty, her hair curlin' on her forehead, *walked* to meet us, with a snow−white baby cuddlin' in her arms.

HIERONYMUS POP AND THE BABY.

NOW, 'Onymus Pop, said the mother of that gentle boy, you jes take keer o' dis chile while I'm gone ter de hangin'. An' don't you leave dis house on no account, not if de skies fall an' de earth opens ter swaller yer"

Hieronymus grunted gloomily. He thought it a burning shame that he should not go to the hanging; but never had his mother been willing that he should have the least pleasure in life. It was either to tend the baby, or mix the cow's food, or to card wool, or cut wood, or to pick a chicken, or wash up the floor, or to draw water, or to sprinkle down the clothes always something. When everything else failed, she had a way, that seemed to her son simply demoniac, of setting him at the alphabet. To be sure, she did not know the letters herself, but her teaching was none the less vigorous.

What's dat, 'Onymus? she would say, pointing at random with her snuff−brush to a letter.

Q with a sniff.

Is you *sho'?* in a hollow voice.

Woe be unto young Pop if he faltered, and said it *might* be a Z. Mother Pop kept a rod ready, and used it as if she were born for nothing else. Naturally, he soon learned to stick brazenly to his first guess. But, unfortunately, he could not remember from one day to another what he had said; and his mother learned, after a time, to distinguish the forms of the letters, and to know that a curly letter called S on Tuesday could not possibly. be a square−shaped E on Thursday. Her faith once shattered, 'Onymus had to suffer in the usual way.

The lad had been taught at spasmodic intervals by his sister Savannah commonly called Sissy who went to school, put on airs, and was always clean. Therefore Hieronymus hated her. Mother Pop herself was a little in awe of her accomplished daughter, and would ask her no questions, even when most in doubt as to which was which of the letters G and C.

A pretty thing! she would mutter to herself, if I must be a−learnin' things from my own chile, dat wuz de mos' colicky baby I ever had, an' cos' me unheard−of miseries in de time of her teethin'.

It seemed to Hieronymus that the climax of his impositions had come when he was forced to stay at home and mind the baby, while his mother and the rest of them trotted off, gay as larks, to see a man hanged.

It was a hot afternoon, and the unwilling nurse suffered. The baby wouldn't go to sleep. He put it on the bed −a feather− bed and why it didn't drop off to sleep, as a proper baby should, was more than the tired soul of Hieronymus could tell. He did everything to soothe Tiddlekins. (The infant had not been named as yet, and by way of affection they addressed it as Tiddlekins.) He even went so far as to wave the flies away from it with a mulberry branch for the space of five or ten minutes. But as it still fretted and tossed he let it severely alone, and the flies settled on the little black thing as if it had been a licorice stick.

After a while Tiddlekins grew aggressive, and began to yell. Hieronymus, who had almost found consolation in studying a gory picture pasted on the wall, cut from the weekly paper of a wicked city, was deprived even of this solace. He picked up de miserbul little screech−owl, as he called it in his wrath. He trotted it. He sung to it the soothing ditty of

'Tain't never gwine to rain no mo';
Sun shines down on rich and po'.

But all was vain. Finally, in despair, he undressed Tiddlekins. He had heard his mother say, Of'en and of'en when a

chile is a−screamin' its breff away 'tain't nothin' ails it 'cep'n *pins.*

But there were no pins. Plenty of strings and hard knots, but not a pin to account for the antics of the unhappy Tiddlekins.

How it *did* scream! It lay on the stiffly braced knees of Hieronymus, and puckered up its face so tightly that it looked as if it had come fresh from a wrinkle mould. There were no tears, but sharp, regular yells, and rollings of its head, and a distracting monotony in its performances.

Dis here chile looks 's if it's got de measles, muttered Hi, gazing on the squirming atom with calm eyes of despair. Then, running his fingers over the neck and breast of the small Tiddlekins, he cried, with the air of one who makes a discovery, It's got de heat! *Dat's* what ails Tiddlekins!

There was really a little breaking out on the child's body that might account for his restlessness and squalls. And it was *such* a hot day! Perspiration streamed down Hi's back, while his head was dry. There was not a quiver in the tree leaves, and the silver−poplars showed only their leaden side. The sunflowers were drooping their big heads; the flies seemed to stick to the window−panes, and were too languid to crawl.

Hieronymus had in him the materials of which philosophers are made. He said to himself, 'Tain't nothin' but heat dat's de matter wid dis baby; so uf *cose* he ought ter be cooled off.

But how to cool him off that was the great question. Hi knitted his dark brows and thought intently.

It happened that the chiefest treasure of the Pop estate was a deep old well that in the hottest days yielded water as refreshing as iced champagne. The neighbors all made a convenience of the Pop well. And half−way down its long, cool hollow hung, pretty much all of the time, milk cans, butter pats, fresh meats all things that needed to be kept cool in summer days.

He looked at the hot, squirming, wretched black baby on his lap; then he looked at the well; and, simple, straightforward lad that he was, he put this and that together.

If I wuz ter hang Tiddlekins down de well, he reflected, 'twouldn't be mo' den three jumps of a flea befo' he's as cool as Christmas.

With this quick−witted youth to think was to act. Before many minutes he had stuffed poor little Tiddlekins into the well bucket, though it must be mentioned to his credit that he tied the baby securely in with his own suspenders.

Warmed up with his exertions, content in this good riddance of such bad rubbish as Tiddlekins, Hieronymus reposed himself on the feather−bed, and dropped off into a sweet slumber. From this he was aroused by the voice of a small boy.

Hello, Hi! I say, Hi Pop! whar is yer?

Here I is! cried Hi, starting up. What you want?

Little Jim Rogers stood in the door−way.

Towzer's dog, he said, in great excitement, and daddy's bull−pup is gwine ter have a fight dis evenin'! Come on quick, if yer wants ter see de fun.

Up jumped Hi, and the two boys were off like a flash. *Not one thought to Tiddlekins in the well bucket!*

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In due time the Pop family got home, and Mother Pop, fanning herself, was indulging in the moral reflections suitable to the occasion, when she checked herself suddenly, exclaiming, But, land o' Jerusalem! whar's 'Onymus an' de baby?

I witnessed Hieronymus, said the elegant Savannah, as I wandered from school. He was with a multitude of boys, who cheered, without a sign of disapperation, two canine beasts that tore each other in deadly feud.

Yer don't mean ter say, Sissy, dat 'Onymus Pop is gone ter a dog fight?

Such are my meaning, said Sissy, with dignity.

Den *whar's* de baby?

For answer, a long, low wail smote upon their ears, as Savannah would have said.

Fan me! cried Mother Pop. Dat's Tiddlekins's voice.

Never min' about fannin' mammy, cried Weekly, Savannah's twin, a youth of fifteen, who could read, and was much addicted to tales of thunder and blood; let's fin' de baby. P'r'aps he's been murdered by dat ruffian Hi, an' cat's his *ghos'* dat we hears a−callin'.

A search was instituted under the bed, in the bed, in the wash−tub and the soup−kettle; behind the wood−pile, and in the pea vines; up the chimney, and in the ash−hopper; but all in vain. No Tiddlekins appeared, though still they heard him cry.

Shade of Ole Hickory! cried the father Pop, whar, whar is dat chile? Then, with a sudden lighting of the eye, Unchain de dog, said he; he'll smell him out.

There was a superannuated blood−hound pertaining to the Pop *ménage* that they kept tied up all day, under a delusion that he was fierce. They unchained this wild animal, and with many kicks endeavored to goad his nostrils to their duty.

It happened that a piece of fresh pork hung in the well, and Lord Percy so was the dog called was hungry. So he hurried with vivacity toward the fresh pork.

De well! shrieked Mother Pop, tumbling down all in a heap, and looking somehow like Turner's Slave−ship, as one stumpy leg protruded from the wreck of red flannel and ruffled petticoats.

What shall we do? said Sissy, with a helpless squeak.

Why, git him out, said Mr. Pop, who was the practical one of the family.

He began to draw up the well bucket, aided by Weekly, who whispered, darkly, Dar'll be anudder hangin' in town befo' long, *and Hi won't miss dat hangin'.*

Soon appeared a little woolly head, then half a black body, the rest of him being securely wedged in the well bucket. He looked like a Jack−in−the−box. But he was cool, Tiddlekins was no doubt of that.

Mother Pop revived at sight of her offspring, still living, and feebly sucking his thumb.

Ef we had a whiskey bath ter put him in! she cried.

Into the house flew Father Pop, seized the quart cup, and

was over to the white house on the hill in the wink of a cat's eye.

He stammered forth his piteous tale, said Savannah, telling the story the next day to her school−mates; and Judge Chambers himself filled his cup with the best of Bourbon, and Miss Clara came over to see us resusirate the

infant.

Mother Pop had Tiddlekins wrapped in hot flannel when he got back; and with a never−to−be−sufficiently−admired economy Mr. Pop moistened a rag with the best of Bourbon, and

said to his wife, Jes rub him awhile, Cynthy, an' see if dat won't bring him roun'.

As she rubbed he absent−mindedly raised the quart cup to his lips, and with three deep and grateful gulps the whiskey bath went to refresh the inner man of Tiddlekins's papa.

Then who so valorous and so affectionate as he? Dire were his threats against Hieronymus, deep his lamentations over his child.

My po' little lammie! he sobbed. Work away, Cynthy. Dat chile mus' be saved, even if I should have ter go over ter de judge's fur anudder quart o' whiskey. Nuthin' shall be spared to save that preciousest kid o' my ole age.

Miss Clara did not encourage his self−sacrificing proposal; but, for all that, it was not long before Tiddlekins grew warm and lively, and winked at his father so that good old man declared as he lay on his back, placidly sucking a pig's tail.

Savannah had roasted it in the ashes, and it had been cut from the piece of pork that had shared the well with Tiddlekins. The pork belonged to a neighbor, by−the−way; but at such a time the Pop family felt that they might dispense with the vain and useless ceremony of asking for it.

The excitement was over, the baby asleep, Miss Clara gone, and the sun well on its way to China, when a small figure was seen hovering diffidently about the gate. It had a limp air of dejection, and seemed to feel some delicacy about coming farther.

The miscreant is got back, remarked Savannah.

Hieronymus, called Mrs. Pop, you may thank yo' heavenly stars dat you ain't a murderer dis summer day

A−waitin' ter be hung nex' wild−grape−time, finished Weekly, pleasantly.

Mr. Pop said nothing. But he reached down from the mantel−shelf a long, thin something, shaped like a snake, and quivered it in the air.

Then he walked out to Hi, and, taking him by the left ear, led him to the wood−pile.

And here But I draw a veil.

SISTER WEEDEN'S PRAYER.

YES we had gethered at the river, as the song says, to see a sight as might have surprised the angels. Ther' wuz a crowd, sure. They had come from the four−mile, an' the six−mile, an' the nine−mile, an' from down in the timber, an' ther' wuz even a pretty smart sprinklin' o' town folks, kind of apart from the rest, with a plenty of artificial

flowers in the'r hats, an' an air of gentility that differed 'em from the farmers' women, with the'r sun−bonnets an' babies. It wuz four o'clock of a Sunday afternoon, an' they wuz all assembled to see young Roland Selph baptized by Preacher Powell, who expounded the Word four times a year at Big Muddy meetin'− house.

It wuz a'most like a meracle. Roland wuz a hard case. My husband who, bein' one o' the swearin' Wallers, as they wuz called in Grandpar Waller's day, had a sort of ancesterl talent for usin' strong words an' better that than for usin' strong drink, says I, when twitted, for what is words but a slap−dash thrown together of letters? an' if a man chooses 'em hard, like goose−quills, instead o' soft, like goose−down, an' nobody's hurt, then where's the harm? well, my husband he allays said that Roland wuz the darnedest man to cuss on the prairie. He never had had no bringin' up wuz the trouble. His father, a rele active, nice man, wuz killed in a mill six months before he wuz born, an' his mother she took on so that she didn't have no strength to git him even so far along as teethin'. So his grandmother she raised him on sheep's milk an' a peach−tree switch. Kicks an' cuffs wuz sandwiched between the poor child's meals, until the old woman died an' left him, kithless an' kinless in the land. A wild−lookin' lad he wuz, with a shock o' black hair that you couldn't 'a combed with a wool−card, an' big eyes bold as the hub of a wheel, an' clothed summer an' winter in *rags!* He wuz mightily in demand at harvest−time, for he wuz as strong as a horse, an' hadn't had a chill since his grandmother broke 'em on him at the age of fourteen with black pepper an' molasses an' santonine, an' a bag o' camphor at the pit of his stomach. But people wuz powerful shy of associatin' with him. He wuz druv to the saloons for company; an' they said he could drink a quart o' whiskey as if it wuz spring−water.

How it had come about nobody knew. Brother Powell never wuz counted to have much influence, an' he looked powerful little an' meachin'−like beside Roland, tall an' broad−chested, an' as handsome as anybody in a bran'−new suit o' brown jeans an' a white shirt clean as clean.

As he went down into the water the men took off the'r hats with a soft, loose sweep, an' the women hushed the'r babies at the'r breasts. The sun shone out broad an' mellow; everything seemed to listen, somehow, as the words wuz uttered over that wild, forsakened one that made him a member o' Christ's great family. Then what a crowdin' roun' an' a han'−shakin' as he came out drippin', an' castin' a glance round half beseechin' an' half a−darin'! It wuz wuth comin' a long way jest to see that poor sinner a−welcomed inter the fold.

But I noticed one curious thing. Mrs. Biscoe wuz there, with her two daughters, Leila an' Jenny Rose an' Lily we used to call 'em, seein' as how one wuz a red beauty an' one a white. Jenny she wuz the fair one wuz the most help to her mother. Leila, for all her rosy cheeks an' black eyes, wuz a lazy little flitter−gibbet. Mrs. Biscoe she wuz a widow: a little, straight, dark woman, with plenty of snap to her, who took in sewin' for a livin', an' wuz much respected in the Baptist society. Well, she gave a quick little nod to'ards Roland jest before he wuz dipped, an' she said, in kind of an undertone, They do look nice girls, don't they? I studied quite a spell over this speech, but I couldn't exactly make out what she meant by it.

Some days after the baptizin', Mrs. Wysnicker of the four−mile invited all the society to a wool−pickin'. Ther' wuzn't any declinations, for Mrs. Wysnicker wuz a master−hand for dinners. Never did she sit you down to her table unless she had fresh, an' maybe a couple o' chickens besides; an' her pie−crust would break inter honest flakes if you so much as p'inted a knife at it. Furthermore, we wanted to see if her wool was so much finer than anybody else's. She had boasted considerable about it, an' we understood that she sheared fourteen pounds to a sheep. So it was candle−light breakfast all over the prairie, an' by seven o'clock we wuz mostly assembled in Mrs. Wysnicker's sittin'−room, ready for work. The wool wuz on a sheet in the middle of the floor, an' a powerful big pile it wuz: seemed as if it reached nearly to the ceilin'. We wuz all a−settin' round it, pretty prim, a−waitin' for the stiffness to wear off.

Ther' wuz one person I wuz surprised to see in the company, an' that wuz Florindy Daggett. 'Twan't often anybody sighted her at wool−pickin's or apple−parin's or rag−tackin's, for she set up for a genteel, an' always washed dishes with, a mop. She wuz a powerful dressy woman, too. Husband he allays said she wuz the kind that 'ud gin

a man's pocket the swinney. But she loved *talk* beyond dress. It wuz joked around that old man Daggett told her once that he'd nuss her cheerful through a twenty−years' spell, if her disease jest happened to be paralysis of the tongue. Ther's apt to be mischief, too, in the tongues of these talkie' females. Thar she set, her mouth a−puckered up, three sand−colored curls a−hangin' as fur as her nose on each side, an', as a last dyin' touch, *kid gloves.* We didn't none of us take much notice of her, but we started out pickin' wool pretty pears. After a little, Florindy she sithed an' said, Sister Wysnicker, what's the duty of one sister in the society when she's discovered another sister in the act o' backslidin'?

P'raps she might make her a present of Brother Throckmorton's 'Serious Review of Infant Sprinklers,' says Sister Wysnicker, who gits a laugh out of most things goin'.

This is no matter for jokin', says Florindy, solemn as Moses in the bulrushes.

Farmer Sweet's wife spoke up very excited: *Sister* Daggett, you *do* surprise me all to pieces! Hev you *reely* caught a backslider? A *man*, of course. *Bad* is the *best* of 'em. Do *pray* don't wait another *minute.* Tell us *all* about it. She wuz a little, sharp woman, whose words tumbled out of her mouth fast as chopped straw out of a thrashin'−machine, an had jest about as much cash value.

No man, says Florindy: *it wuz a woman.* An' what she wuz doin' is so ser'ous an' awful that reveal it I won't unless the sisters here think it is my *duty.*

Well, now, do you know, not one of us had the Christian charity to say, Hold your tongue, Florindy. Truth is, we wuz dyin' to hear what it wuz: so we jest edged our cheers a little closer together, an' sort of slacked in the wool−pickin'.

Last Sunday, about noon, says Florindy, speakin' slow an' impressive, as I wuz a−returnin' home after visitin' my brother's sick child, my throat got so dry that I knew I must have a drink of water. So I stopped at a certain cottage on the four−mile, where there is an althea−bush a−growin' in the yard, an' an oleander in a tub by the steps

The Biscoes!

I name no names. The front door wuz shut, an' the blind wuz drawn close, an' I mistrusted they wuz not at home. So I opened the slats very gently an' looked in

An' what did ye see? Do, for goodness' sake, stop lookin' so mysterious. An' Farmer Sweet's wife tore at a piece of wool quite reckless.

I saw the three of 'em on the Lord's−day in a room dark as iniquity a−sewin' for dear life!

Sewin' Sewin'! Sewin'! Sewin'! Sewin'!

You reely would have thought it wuz the hissin' of a ring of geese.

I stood there for a minute, says Florindy, quite stagnated, as you may say, with surprise; an', besides, I wanted to see what they wuz sewin' on. But I couldn't make out, for the life o' me, an' I didn't dare to open the slats any wider.

That ain't the pint at all, says Sister Sweet: whether 'twas carpet−rags, or seed−bags, or satin robes for the rich, it's all one. The sin wuz in sewin' at all on the Lord's−day.

Unless it wuz for a corpse, says Sister Wysnicker, or funeral clothes for the family.

Well it ain't no question of a corpse this time. An' what's to be done about it?

I'm lookin' for Sister Biscoe every minute. She's a mighty good hand at wool, an' she promised to come. soon as ever she could git off.

All I have to say, cries Florindy, is that when she steps *in* I steps *out.* Hold countenance with sinners I won't. You can't touch pitch an' not be defiled. Ther's doctrine for it.

Mrs. Wysnicker looked powerful bothered, jest as if she didn't know which way to turn. We haven't heard from Sister Weeden yet, says she: perhaps she will give us a word in season.

Sister Weeden wuz the impressivest female in the Baptist society. She wuz tall an' clean−cut, an' not a bend in her from neck to knee. What she said *wuz said.* She had high cheekbones, an' black eyes, an' a great twist of milk−white hair coiled on top of her head. I have listened, says she, an' if what Sister Daggett charges shell be proven true, we must expel Dorothy Biscoe from the society an' leave her to the mercy of God.

Cold shivers ran down our backs: it wuz jest as if she had said *Selah.*

At this minute I happened to look sideways through a crack in the door, an' what should I see but Leila Biscoe half stretched out on a lounge, with a picture−paper crumpled up in her hand! Her head wuz up, an' she wuz a−listenin' with all her ears, her face red as fire, an' her eyes sparklin', as lazy brown eyes will when they git fired up.

Up she jumped as she caught my eye an' ran out of the other door. I said nothin' to anybody, but I quietly slipped after the child, a−leavin' my bonnet behind. I mistrusted she wuz goin' to meet her mother; an', sure enough, Mrs. Biscoe an' Jenny wuz footin' it along the road, when Leila flew at 'em, raisin' the dust with a swirl around her.
Mother, she cries, dons go near 'em. *Don't!* the scandalous old cats!

Leily Biscoe! what under the blue sky *air* you talkin' about? She took the child by the arm an' plumped her down into a fence−corner. Now! says she.

Why, mammie, that horrid, sneakin', pryin', white−eyed

Leila!

Well, then, the beautiful Mistress Florinda Daggett peeped into our windows last Sunday

Oh!

An' saw us sewin'; an' they are havin' no end of a time about it, an' won't sit in the room with you, an' say you shall be expelled from the society

So!

I put in a word now, an' tried to smooth down matters; but, my stars! Sister Biscoe looked as if she could bite steel.

Let's go home, mammie, said Jenny, beginnin' to cry.

Home! says she: we're goin' to the wool−pickin'.

But I tell you, cried Leila, they won't have you; they will insult you.

You can go home if you want to.

Leila felt, maybe, that she hadn't deserved sech a snub, so she tossed her head an' followed her mar. I could hardly keep up with 'em. I hadn't felt so warmed up an' excited not sence I brought Belle Burns through a congestive chill after the doctor had give her up.

My soul! them women jumped when they seen the widow an' her two daughters standin' at the door, as if the sheared sheep wuz a−chargin' in after the wool they'd been robbed of.

I hear, says Sister Biscoe, that my friends an' neighbors have been makin' mighty free with my name.

Lor! says Sister Wysnicker, in a quaverin' sort o' voice; who's been a−bearin' any slanderous tale to you?

Slanderous, is it? Well, my daughter Leila is the bearer. I sent her on ahead of me this mornin', an' she wuzn't no farther from your talk than the next room.

Nobody's said nothin' that they ain't willin' to stand by, snapped Florindy Daggett. Women that use God's day for puttin' money in their pockets must be ready to face the consequences.

Two red spots came out on the widow's cheeks; her eyes shot sparks like flints struck together. I've nothin' to say to *you*, she says, turnin' her back on Florindy, but the rest of you shall hear what's behind the story she's told. It looks as if those that has known me all my life, watched me strugglin' with poverty, workin' to keep a roof over these two girls that wuz left babes on my hands, an' never heard so much as a breath against me or mine, *might 'a waited a little* before talkin' about expellin' me from the society.

Everybody colored up, an' Farmer Sweet's wife she whimpered a little.

I *wish* you'd take a cheer, Sister Biscoe, said Sister Wysnicker, real entreatin'.

I'll sit in no house nor break bread under no roof till my pardon has been asked by all that thought ill of me.

Florindy sniffed, but no one j'ined in.

Last Friday night a week ago, says Sister Biscoe, Roland Selph knocked with his ridin'−whip against my door. Jenny opened it, a−drawin' back when she saw who it wuz, for Roland has a kiss an' a joke for every girl who will let him come near enough. But he walked in very quiet, a−followin' her into the back room, where I sat sewin'.

'Mrs. Biscoe,' says he, 'can you make me some decent clothes agin Sunday?'

'Not agin Sunday, Roland,' says I, 'for it's Friday night now.'

He set quite a while without sayin' anything, a−hittin' his boot with his whip, an' finally he said, in a loud, defiant sort of way, that he *hed* thought of bein' baptized Sunday, if he could git anything to put on his back, for he wuz perfectly ragged.

'You baptized!' says Leila, pertly. 'Is the world comin' to an end?'

'Mebbe,' says he, very sullen, an' got up as if he would go. But I found strength to stop him. 'Good gracious!' says I, 'don't fly off the let's talk it over.'

The long and the short of it is that I soon saw Roland wuz a−tremblin' between two worlds. He wuz that unregenerate that he wouldn't face the public at Big Muddy without the befittin' clothes, yet the Spirit wuz so workin' within him that he had set his heart on sealin' himself to God the comin' Sunday. I thought of suggestin' to him to wait until Brother Powell came round again; but, seein' as how he wuz just out of the devil's clutches by a needle's length, as you may say, I didn't *dare* to say 'put it off' to him. Would any sister here have done it?

NO! says Sister Weeden, lettin' the word drop very ponderous.

It might be then or never. To be the means of stoppin' him wuz more of a responsibility than I could shoulder. There wuz tears on Jenny's cheeks, an' she whispered to me, 'Say that you will, mammie.' An' even Leila nodded when I looked inquirin' at her. 'Roland,' says I, 'we'll do it. Come for your clothes Sunday noon. They'll be ready, and without money an' without price, for it's the Lord's work.'

We got 'em cut out that night, an' we worked steady Saturday, an' Saturday night, an' Sunday mornin'. Yes, we did work on the Lord's−day, for mortal fingers couldn't 'a finished the job without.

By luck an' plannin' we saved all the hand−sewin' till the last, so that the noise of a machine runnin' on Sunday shouldn't bring reproach on my house. For many a thing is all right if it's kept quiet that fools label wrong if it comes to their ears.

That's about the whole story. You all saw Roland Selph baptized that afternoon, an' can bear witness to how modest an' handsome he looked in his clean new suit, with the light of the Gospel a−shinin' on his face. I won't speak of myself; but as for my two girls, who had gone without rest an' food, an' worked their fingers sore, to put him where he stood, I only hope that all of you said 'Amen' to Brother Powell's prayer with as clean a conscience as theirs. An' I will say for myself that, just as sure as my name is Dorothy Biscoe, I would do it all over again! *An' it's a business between me an' my God.*

She had swept us all along; and we wuz throwed into a confusion when she stopped short an' sudden, as if waitin' for some one to speak. Nobody knew jest how to lead off, an' it wuz a relief when Sister Weeden rose up an' says, Let us pray!

Down we all knelt promiscuous, the wool a−scatterin' from our laps, an' Sister Weeden, without stoppin' a minute to think up her words for prayin' comes to her by nature began: O Father, our hearts is vile an' unclean as the wool we've been pickin' out this day; quick to catch at evil as sheep's backs to catch at brambles an' briers in pushin' through a thicket; clogged with meanness an' jealousies an' suspicions, till they're got no will nor power to beat harmonious with thy Spirit, which is love. O Lord, we'd give up, despairin', if it wuzn't that immortal patience can cleanse them of trash that defiles; if it wuzn't that Immanuel's blood can wash the blackness of blackness away; if it wuzn't that we knew forgiveness wuz held out free as long as breath held body an' soul together Every day Satan dangles some new temptation before us, an' we fall inter sin. Most especial to−day hev we failed in charity toward our sister here, condemnin' her without a hearin', an' never a−dreamin' that it wuz the Lord's work to which she give his day, as sinless as the act of Him who plucked the ears of corn an' wuz reproached by the lip−servin' Jews. Put it inter her heart, O Father, to pardon us without much more said about it. All for the dear sake of him who died for us. Amen.

Then we said the Lord's Prayer all together, an' somehow a good, healthy shame laid hold of us an' made us humble in our own conceit for once.

We didn't exactly like to look Sister Biscoe in the eye when we got up. We didn't know but what she'd hold out till we had made apologies all 'round; an' how to do it wuz more than we knew.

But, dear sakes! Sister Wysnicker she's such a comfortable woman she says, quite natural, Won't you take off your things, Sister Biscoe, an' help us out with this wool? It's a powerful sight worse 'n I looked for it to be.

To be sure, says Sister Biscoe, a little hystericky, but very cheerful; ain't that what I'm here for?

So, pretty soon we wuz workin' like bees, an' chattin' by spells, as neighbors should, about the harvestin', an' the hard work, an' the aguey, an' the Republican rally, an' the thrivin' business of them wicked saloons when politics wuz flyin' all abroad, an' other subjects harmonious to the company.

Jenny she stood by her mother and helped; but as for Miss Leila, she tossed her head and walked off home, as unforgivin' a young one as ever listened to prayer with a stony heart.

AUNT ANNIKY'S TEETH.

AUNT ANNIKY was an African dame, fifty years old, and of an imposing presence. As a waffle−maker she possessed a gift beyond the common, but her unapproachable talent lay in the province of nursing. She seemed born for the benefit of sick people. She should have been painted with the apple of healing in her hand. For the rest, she was a funny, illiterate old darkey, vain, affable, and neat as a pink.

On one occasion my mother had a dangerous illness. Aunt Anniky nursed her through it, giving herself no rest night nor day until her patient had come back to de walks an' ways ob life, as she expressed the dear mother's recovery. My father, overjoyed and grateful, felt that we owed this result quite as much to Aunt Anniky as to our family doctor, so he announced his intention of making her a handsome present, and, like King Herod, left her free to choose what it should be. I shall never forget how Aunt Anniky looked as she stood there smiling and bowing, and bobbing the funniest little courtesies all the way down to the ground.

And you would never guess what it was the old woman asked for.

Well, Mars' Charles, said she (she had been one of our old servants, and always called my father Mars' Charles), to tell you de livin' trufe, my soul an' body is a−yearnin' fur a han'sum chany set o' teef.

A set of teeth! cried father, surprised enough. And have you none left of your own?

I has gummed it fur a good many ye'rs, said Aunt Anniky, with a sigh; but not wishin' ter be ongrateful ter my

obligations, I owns ter havin' five nateral teef. But dey is po' sogers: dey shirks battle. One ob dem's got a little somethin' in it as lively as a speared worm, an' I tell you when anything teches it, hot or cold, it jest makes me *dance!* An' anudder is in my top jaw, an' ain't got no match fur it in de bottom one; an' one is broke off nearly to de root; an' de las' two is so yeller dat I's ashamed ter show 'em in company, an' so I lif's my turkey tail ter my mouf every time I laughs or speaks.

Father turned to mother with a musing air. The curious student of humanity, he remarked, traces resemblances where they are not obviously conspicuous. Now, at the first blush one would not think of any common ground of meeting for our Aunt Anniky and the Empress Josephine. Yet that fine French lady introduced the fashion of handkerchiefs by continually raising delicate lace *mouchoirs* to her lips to hide her bad teeth. Aunt Anniky lifts her turkey tail! It really seems that human beings should be classed by *strata,* as if they were metals

in the earth. Instead of dividing by nations, let us class by qualities. So we might find Turk, Jew, Christian, fashionable lady and washer−woman, master and slave, hanging together, like cats on a clothes−line, by some connecting cord of affinity

In the mean time, said my mother, mildly, Aunt Anniky is waiting to know if she is to have her teeth.

Oh, surely, surely! cried father, coming out of the clouds, with a start. I am going to the village to−morrow, Anniky, in the spring wagon. I will take you with me, and we will see what the dentist can do for you.

Bless yo' heart, Mars' Charles! said the delighted Anniky; you're jest as good as yo' blood an' yo' name, an' mo' I *couldn't* say.

The morrow came, and with it Aunt Anniky, gorgeously arrayed in a flaming red calico, a bandanna handkerchief, and a string of carved yellow beads that glistened on her bosom like fresh buttercups on a hill−slope.

I had petitioned to go with the party, for, as we lived on a plantation, a visit to the village was something of an event.

A brisk drive soon brought us to the centre of the Square. A glittering sign hung brazenly from a high window on its western side, bearing, in raised black letters, the name Doctor Alonzo Babb.

Dr. Babb was the dentist and the odd fish of our village. He beams in my memory as a big, round man, with hair and smiles all over his face, who talked incessantly, and said things to make your blood run cold.

Do you see this ring? he said, as he bustled about, polishing his instruments, and making his preparations for the sacrifice of Aunt Anniky. He held up his right hand, on the forefinger of which glistened a ring the size of a dog−collar. Now, what d'ye s'pose that's made of?

Brass, suggested father, who was funny when not philosophical.

Brass! cried Dr. Babb, with a withering look: it's virgin gold, that ring is. And where d'ye s'pose I found the gold?

My father ran his hands into his pockets in a retrospective sort of way.

In the mouths of my patients, every grain of it, said the dentist, with a perfectly diabolical smack of the lips: old fillings plugs, you know that I saved, and had made up into this shape. Good deal of sentiment about such a ring as this.

Sentiment of a mixed nature, I should say, murmured my father, with a grimace.

Mixed? rather! A speck here, a speck there. Some times an eye, oftener a jaw, occasionally a front. More than a hundred men, I s'pose, have helped in the cause.

Law, doctor! you beats de birds, you does, cried Aunt Anniky, whose head was as flat as the floor where her reverence bump should have been; you know how dey snatches de wool from every bush to make deir nests.

Lots of company for me that ring is, said the doctor, ignoring the pertinent, or impertinent, interruption. Often, as I sit in the twilight, I twirl it around and around, a−thinking of the wagon−loads of food it has masticated, the blood that has flowed over it, the groans that it has cost Now, old lady, if you will sit just here

He motioned Aunt Anniky, to the chair, into which she dropped in a limp sort of way, recovering herself immediately, however, and sitting bolt−upright in a rigid attitude of defiance. Some moments of persuasion were necessary before she could be induced to lean back and allow Dr. Babb's fingers on her nose while she breathed the laughing−gas; but once settled, the expression faded from her countenance almost as quickly as a magic−lantern picture vanishes. I watched her nervously, my attention divided between her vacant−looking face and a dreadful picture on the wall. It represented Dr. Babb himself minus the hair, but with double the number of smiles, standing by a patient from whose mouth he had apparently just extracted a huge molar that he held triumphantly in his forceps. A gray−haired old gentleman regarded the pair with benevolent interest. The photograph was entitled, His First Tooth.

Attracted by that picture? said Dr. Alonzo, affably, his fingers on Aunt Anniky's pulse. My par had that struck off the first time I ever got a tooth out. That's par with the gray hair and the benediction attitude. Tell you, he was proud of me! I had such an awful tussle with that tooth! Thought the old fellow's jaw was bound to break! But I got it out, and after that my par took me with him 'round the country starring the provinces, you know and I practiced on the natives.

By this time Aunt Anniky was well under the influence of the gas, and in an incredibly short space of time her five teeth were out. As she came to herself, I am sorry to say, she was rather silly, and quite mortified me by winking at Dr. Babb in the most confidential manner, and repeating over and over again, Honey, yer ain't harf as smart as yer thinks yer is!

After a few weeks of sore gums Aunt Anniky appeared radiant with her new teeth. The effect was certainly funny. In the first place, blackness itself was not so black as Aunt Anniky. She looked as if she had been dipped in ink and polished off with lamp−black. Her very eyes showed but the faintest rim of white. But those teeth were white enough to make up for everything. She had selected them herself, and the little, ridiculous, milk−white things were more fitted for the mouth of a Titania than for the great cavern in which Aunt Anniky's tongue moved and had its being. The gums above them were black, and when she spread her wide mouth in a laugh it always reminded me of a piano−lid opening suddenly and showing all the black and white ivories at a glance. Aunt Anniky laughed a good deal, too, after getting her teeth in,

and declared she had never been so happy in her life. It was observed, to her credit, that she put on no airs of pride, but was as sociable as ever, and made nothing of taking out her teeth and handing them around for inspection among her curious and admiring visitors. On that principle of human nature which glories in attracting attention to the weakest part, she delighted in tough meats, stale bread, green fruits, and all other eatables that test the biting quality of the teeth. But finally destruction came upon them in a way that no one could have foreseen.

Uncle Ned was an old colored man, who lived alone in a cabin not very far from Aunt Anniky's, but very different from hers in point of cleanliness and order. In fact, Uncle Ned's wealth, apart from a little corn crop, consisted in a lot of fine young pigs that ran in and out of the house at all times, and were treated by their owner as tenderly as if they had been his children. One fine day the old man fell sick of a fever, and he sent in haste for Aunt Anniky to come and nurse him. He agreed to give her a pig in case she brought him through; should she fail to do so, she was to receive no pay. Well, Uncle Ned got well, and the next thing we heard was that he refused to pay the pig. My father was usually called on to settle all the disputes in the neighborhood; so one morning Anniky and Ned appeared before him, both looking very indignant.

I'd jes like ter tell yer, Mars' Charles, began Uncle Ned, ov de trick dis miser'ble ole nigger played on me.

Go on, Ned, said my father, with a resigned air.

Well, it war de fift' night o' de fever, said Uncle Ned, an' I wuz a−tossin' an' a−moanin', an' ole Anniky jes lay back in her cheer an' snored as ef a dozen frogs wuz in her throat. I wuz a−perishin' an' a−burnin' wid thirst an' I

hollered to Anniky; but lor! I might as well 'a hollered to a tombstone! It wuz ice I wanted; an' I knowed dar wuz a glass somewhar on my table wid cracked ice in it. Lor! lor! how dry I wuz! I neber longed fur whiskey in my born days ez I panted fur dat ice. It wuz powerful dark, fur de grease wuz low in de lamp, an' de wick spluttered wid a dyin' flame. But I felt aroun', feeble like an' slow, till my fingers touched a glass. I pulled it to me, an' I run my hen' in an' grabbed de ice, as I s'posed, an' flung it in my mouf, an' crunched an' crunched

Here there was an awful pause. Uncle Ned pointed his thumb at Anniky, looked wildly at my father, and said, in a hollow voice: *It wuz Anniky's teef.*

My father threw back his head and laughed as I had never heard him laugh. Mother from her sofa joined in. I was doubled up−like a jackknife in the corner. But as for the

principals in the affair, neither of their faces moved a muscle. They saw no joke. Aunt Anniky, in a dreadful, muffled, squashy sort of voice, took up the tale:

Nexsh ting I knowed, Marsh Sharles, somebody's sheizin' me by de head, a−jammin' it up 'gin de wall, a−jawin' at me like de angel Gabriel at de rish ole sinners in de bad plashe an' afar wash ole Ned a−spittin' like a black cat, an' a−howlin' so dreadful dat I tought he wash de debil; an' when I got de light, afar wash my beautiful chany teef a−flung aroun' like scattered seed−corn on de flo', an' Ned a−swarin' he'd have de law o' me.

An' arter all dat, broke in Uncle Ned, she purtends to lay a claim fur my pig. But I says no, sir; I don't pay nobody nothin' who's played me a trick like dat.

Trick! said Aunt Anniky, scornfully; whar's de trick? Tink I wanted yer ter eat my teef? An' furdermo', Marsh Sharles, dar's jes dis about it. When dat night set in dar warn's no mo' hope fur ole Ned den fur a foundered sheep. Laws−a−mussy! cat's why I went ter sleep. I wanted ter hev strengt' ter put on his burial clo'es in de mornin'. But don' yer see, Marsh Sharles, dat when he got so mad it brought on a sweat dat *broke de fever!* It saved him! But fur all dat, arter munchin' an' manglin' my chany teef, he has de imperdence of tryin' to 'prive me of de pig dat I honestly 'arned.

It was a hard case. Uncle Ned sat there a very image of injured dignity, while Aunt Anniky bound a red handkerchief around her mouth and fanned herself with her turkey tail.

I am sure I don't know how to settle the matter, said father, helplessly. Ned, I don't see but that you'll have to pay up.

Neber, Mars' Charles neber!

Well, suppose you get married? suggested father, brilliantly. That will unite your interests, you know.

Aunt Anniky tossed her head. Uncle Ned was old, wizened, wrinkled as a raisin, but he eyed Anniky over with a supercilious gaze, and said, with dignity, Ef I wanted ter marry, I could git a likely young gal.

All the four points of Anniky's turban shook with indignation. Pay me fur dem chany teef! she hissed.

Some visitors interrupted the dispute at this time, and the two old darkies went away.

A week later Uncle Ned appeared, with rather a sheepish look.

Well, Mars' Charles, he said, I's 'bout concluded dat I'll marry Anniky.

Ah! is that so?

'Pears like it's de onliest way I kin save my pigs, said Uncle Ned, with a sigh. When she's married she's boun' ter *'bey* me. Women, *'bey* your husban's; cat's what de good Book says.

Yes, she will *bay* you, I don't doubt, said my father, making a pun that Uncle Ned could not appreciate.

An' ef ever she opens her jaw ter me 'bout dem ar teef,' he went on, I'll *mash* her.

Uncle Ned tottered on his legs like an unscrewed fruit stand, and I had my own opinion as to his mashing Aunt Anniky. This opinion was confirmed the next day when my father offered her his congratulations. You are old enough to know your own mind, he remarked.

I's ole, maybe, said Anniky, but so is a oak−tree, an' it's wigorous, I reckon. I's a purty wigorous sort o' growth myself, an' I reckon I'll have my own way wid Ned. I'm gwine ter fatten dem pigs o' his'n, an' you see ef I don't sell 'em nex' Christmas fur money 'nouf ter git a new string o' chany teef.

Look here, Anniky, said father, with a burst of generosity, you and Ned will quarrel about those teeth till the day of doom; so I will make you a wedding present of another set, that you may begin married life in harmony.

Aunt Anniky expressed her gratitude. An' dis time, she said, with sudden fury, I sleeps wid 'em in.

The teeth were presented, and the wedding preparations began. The expectant bride went over to Ned's cabin and gave it such a clearing up as it had never had. But Ned did not seem happy. He devoted himself entirely to his pigs, and wandered about, looking more wizened every day. Finally he came to our gate and beckoned to me mysteriously.

Come over to my house, honey, he whispered, an' bring a pen an' ink an' a piece o' paper wid yer. I wants you ter write me a letter.

I ran into the house for my little writing−desk, and followed Uncle Ned to his cabin.

Now, honey, he said, after barring the door carefully, don't you ax me no questions, but jes put down de words dat comes out o' my mouf on dat ar paper.

Very well, Uncle Ned; go on.

Anniky Hobbleston, he began, dat weddin' ain't a−gwine ter come off. You cleans up too much ter suit me. I ain't used ter so much water splashin' aroun'. Dirt is warmin'. Spec' I'd freeze dis winter if you wuz here. An' you got too much tongue. Besides, I's got anudder wife over in Tipper. An' I ain't a−gwine ter marry. As fur havin' de law, I's a−leavin' dese parts, an' I takes de pigs wid me. Yer can't fin' *dem*, an' yer can't fin' me. *Fur I ain't a−gwine ter marry.* I wuz born a bachelor, an' a bachelor will I represent myself befo' de judgment−seat. If you gives yer promise ter say no mo' 'bout dis marryin' business, p'raps I'll come back some day. So no mo' at present from your humble worshipper, NED CUDDY.

Isn't that last part rather inconsistent? said I, greatly amused.

Yes, honey, if yer says so; an' it's kind o' soothin' to de feelin's of a woman, yer know.

I wrote it all down, and read it aloud to Uncle Ned.

Now, my chile, he said, I'm a−gwine ter git on my mule soon as de moon rises, an' drive my pigs ter Col'water Gap, whar I'll stay an' fish. Soon as I'm well gone you take dis letter ter Anniky, but *min'* don't tell whar I's gone. An' if she takes it all right, an' promises ter let me alone, you write me a letter, an' I'll git de fust Methodis' preacher I run across in de woods ter read it ter me. Den, ef it's all right, I'll come back an' weed yer flower−gyardin fur yer as purty as preachin'.

I agreed to do all Uncle Ned asked, and we parted like conspirators. The next morning Uncle Ned was missing, and after waiting a reasonable time I explained the matter to my parents, and went over with his letter to Aunt Anniky.

Powers above! was her only comment as I got through the remarkable epistle. Then, after a pause to collect her thoughts, she seized me by the shoulder, saying: Run to yo' pappy, honey, quick, an' ax him if he's gwine ter stick ter his bargain 'bout de teef. You know he p'intedly said dey wuz a *weddin'* gif'.

Of course my father sent word that she must keep the teeth, and my mother added a message of sympathy, with a present of a pocket−handkerchief to dry Aunt Anniky's tears.

But It's all right, said that sensible old soul, opening her piano−lid with a cheerful laugh. Bless you, chile, it wuz de teef I wanted, not de man! An', honey, you jes sen' word to dat shif'less ole nigger, ef you know whar he's gone, to come back home an' git his crap in de groun'; an', as fur as I'm consarned, you jes let him know dat I wouldn't pick him up wid a ten−foot pole, not ef he wuz ter beg me on his knees till de millennial day.

DR. JEX'S PREDICAMENT

IT was the funniest thing that I ever saw in my life. Cruikshank would have gloried in it. I wish I had him here to illustrate that scene with the spirited vigor that only his dancing pencil gives.

It was in Kentucky that it happened that pleasant land of blue−grass, and tobacco, and fine stock, and white−teethed girls. Mabel, my sister, had married Dick Hucklestone, and they had begun life in great contentment and a little three−roomed house scarcely big enough to hold the bridal presents. But they were happy, hearty, healthy. They had two cows, ice−cream every day, a charming baby, and Uncle Brimmer. Who shall say that their cup was not full? Indeed, they thought it full before Uncle Brimmer added himself thereto a very ponderous rose−leaf. He was one of our old family servants, who fondly believed that Miss Mabel and her young husband would never be able to get on without him. He walked all the way from Mississippi to Kentucky, with his things tied up in a meal sack, and presented himself before Mabel, announcing affably that he had come to stay on.

But I haven't any place for you, Uncle Brimmer, said Mabel, divided between hospitality and embarrassment.

Lor', honey, you kin jes tuck me aroun' *anywhar*. I don't take up no room.

Mabel looked thoughtfully upon the big, brown, gray− whiskered old negro, whose proportions were those of a Hercules, and shook her head. You are not a Tom Thumb, Uncle Brimmer.

No, ma'am, said he, submissively, but I've got his *sperit*. Couldn't I sleep in de kitchen, honey? he went on, with insinuating sweetness.

No, indeed! cried our young house−keeper. I put my foot down on anybody sleeping in the kitchen.

Aunt Patsey, the cook, stood by, balancing a pan of flour on her head, one fat hand on her hip. I suspected her of a personal interest in the matter, and indeed she afterward acknowledged that she thought Uncle Brimmer's coming would prove a blessin' to her feet. Those feet of hers had been saved many steps through the service of her ten−year−old daughter, Nancy Palmira Kate called Nanky Pal for short. But of late Nanky's services had been called into requisition as a nurse, and Aunt Patsey, who was fat and scant o' breath, thought she had too much to do; and so she viewed with evident delight the stalwart proportions of our good−natured giant from the South.

Dar's de lof', Miss Mabel, she suggested.

It is too small, and is cluttered up with things already.

Oh, sho, chile, afar ain't nothin' in dat lof' 'cep' de 'taters, an' de peppers, an' de dried apples, an' some strings o' terbacker, an' de broken plough, an' some odds an' ends o' de chiller's, an Lucy Crittenden's pups. Lor', afar ain't nothin ter speak of in de lof'.

He can't get in at the window, said Mabel, shifting her ground.

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Lemme try, said Uncle Brimmer.

The kitchen was a small log−cabin, some distance from the house in good hollerin' reach, to quote Aunt Patsey. Above it was a low room, or loft, crowded with the miscellaneous articles enumerated. The only way of getting into it was from the outside. A ladder against the side of the cabin admitted one, through a little window, no larger, I am sure, than that of a railway coach, into this storehouse of treasures. Nanky Pal, who was as slim as a snake, was usually selected to fetch and carry through the small aperture. But Uncle Brimmer!

I'm pretty sho' I kin do it, he said, squinting up one eye, as he took off his coat and prepared to try.

We stood in the door−way as he cautiously went up the ladder; and after an exciting moment he pushed himself through the window, and, turning, smiled triumphantly.

This settled the matter. A cot bed was procured for Uncle Brimmer, and he soon became the main−stay of the family. Cheerfully avoiding all the work possible; indifferently as an ostrich eating all he could find in cupboards or highways; grimly playing hobgoblin for baby; gayly twanging his banjo on moonlight nights memory recalls thee, with a smile, Uncle Brimmer! I can close my eyes now and recall him, big, shapeless, indistinct in the semi−darkness, as he sat under the mulberry−tree, singing:

Wish I wuz in Tennessee,
A−settin' in my cheer,
Jug o' whiskey by my side,
An' arms aroun' my dear!

This was his favorite. Who shall doubt that it expressed to him all the poetry, romance, passion, of life?

After a time Uncle Brimmer fell ill, and we sent for a doctor.

Dr. Trattles Jex was the medical man of our county. He lived in Middleburn, seven miles away, and he came trotting over on a great bay horse, with a pair of saddle−bags hanging

like Gilpin's bottles, one on either side. He looked as diminutive as a monkey perched on the tall horse's back, and indeed he was a wee bit pawky body, as was said of Tommy Moore. But, bless me! he was as pompous and self−important as though he had found the place to stand on, and could move the world with his little lever. A red handkerchief carefully pinned across his chest showed that he had lungs and a mother. His boots were polished to the last degree. His pink and beardless face betrayed his youth; and his voice ah, his voice! what a treasure it would have been could he have let it out to masqueraders! Whether it was just changing from that of youth to that of a man, or whether, like reading and writing, it came by nature, I can't tell. One instant it was deep and bass, the next, squeaking and soprano. No even tenor about that voice!

He held out his hand, with, GOOD−MORNING, *Mrs. Hucklestone. I hope* THE BABY HAS NOT HAD *an attack?*

I popped into the dining−room to giggle, but little well−bred Mabel did not even smile.

Oh no! she cried; it is Uncle Brimmer.

The doctor offered to see him at once. Mabel got up to lead the way. Up to this moment I warrant it had not struck her as anything out−of−the−way that she must invite Dr. Jex to climb a ladder and crawl through a window to get at his patient. But as she looked at him, speckless, spotless, gloved, scented, curled, then at the ladder leaning against the wall in a disreputable, rickety sort of way, a sense of incongruity seemed borne in on her soul. To add to her distress and my hilarity, we saw that Uncle Brimmer had hung out of the window some mysterious under−rigging that he wore. Long, red, and ragged, it flaunted in the breeze as picturesquely as the American flag on a Fourth of July.

I am afraid, doctor, it will be a little awkward, faltered Mabel; Uncle Brimmer is up there; and she waved her lily hand.

An' you'll have ter climb de ladder, put in Nanky Pal, with a disrespectful chuckle.

I thought the little doctor gasped; but he recovered himself gallantly, and said:

AS A BOY I HAVE CLIMBED *trees, and* THINK I CAN ASCEND A l *adder as a man;* and he smiled heroically.

We watched him. He was encumbered by the saddle−bags, but he managed very well, and had nearly reached the top, when suddenly Uncle Brimmer's head and shoulders protruded, giving him the look of a snail half out of its shell.

Here's my pulse, doctor, he cried, blandly, extending his bared arm. 'Tain't no place for you up here. An' here's my tongue. Then out went his tongue for Dr. Jex's inspection.

The doctor settled himself on a rung of the ladder, quite willing to be met half−way. Professional inquiries began, when

A deep sound struck like a rising knell.

Good gracious! exclaimed Mabel; what is that?

Nanky Pal sprung up, with distended eyes, almost letting the baby fall.

Again,

Nearer, clearer, deadlier than before.

Sakes alive, Miss Mabel! cried Nanky, ole Mr. Simmons's bull's done broke loose!

She was right. A moment more, and in rushed the splendid, angry beast, bellowing, pawing the ground, shaking his evil, lowered head as if the devil were contradicting him.

Dr. Jex turned a scared face. My lord Bull caught sight of the fluttering red rags, and charged the side of the house. And I give you my word, the next instant the ladder was knocked from under the doctor's feet, and he was clinging frantically round the neck of Uncle Brimmer.

Fearful moment!

Pull him in, Uncle Brimmer pull him in! shrieked Mabel, dancing about.

I can't, honey I can't, gasped the choking giant; I'm *stuck.*

Hold me UP! cried the doctor. SEND FOR *help!*

Uncle Brimmer seized him by the arm−pits. The saddlebags went clattering down, and about the head of Master Bull a cloud of quinine, calomel, Dover's and divers other powders and pills, broke in blinding confusion.

Aunt Patsey, go for Mr. Hucklestone *at once!* called Mabel.

Aunt Patsey looked cautiously out from the kitchen door. Yer don't ketch *me* in de yard wid ole Simmons's bull, she said, with charming independence.

Then I shall send Nanky Pal.

If Nanky Pal goes outen dat house I'll break every bone in her body.

Then Mabel began to beg: Aunt Patsey, let her go, please. I'll give you a whole bagful of quilt pieces, and my ruby rep polonaise that you begged me for yesterday.

Aunt Patsey's head came out a little farther. An' what else?

And a ruffled pillow−sham, said Mabel, almost in tears, and some white sugar, and I'll make you a hat and that's *all. Now.*

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I reckon cat's about as much as de chile is wuth, said the philosophic mother. Let her go.

Fly! fly! cried Mabel.

I ain't skeered, said Nanky. I ain't dat sort. Mammy ain't nuther. She wuz jes waitin' ter see how much you'd give.

Nanky's bare legs scudded swiftly across the yard. The bull took no notice of her. He was still stamping and bellowing under that window. Uncle Brimmer and the doctor clung together, and only a convulsive kick now and then testified to the little man's agony.

Suppose Uncle Brimmer should let go? I suggested, in a hollow whisper.

Oh, hush! cried Mabel. The doctor's blood would be on our heads.

Or the bull's horns.

It was not far to the tobacco field, and in an incredibly short time brother John came riding in, followed by half a dozen stout negroes. With some delightful play that gave one quite an idea of a Spanish bull−fight, his lordship was captured, and our little doctor was assisted to the house.

Gone was the glory of Dr. Trattles Jex. His coat was torn, his knees grimy, his hands scratched, and he looked yes as if he had been crying.

Can you ever forgive us? said Mabel, piteously. She hovered about him like a little mother. She made him drink two glasses of wine; she mended his coat; she asked him if he would not like to kiss the baby. And finally a wan smile shone in the countenance of Dr. Jex. For me, I felt my face purpling, and leaving him to Mabel, I fled with brother John to the smoke−house, where we roared.

Uncle Brimmer got well, and went in to see the doctor. He returned with a new cravat, a cane, and several smart articles of attire, from which we inferred that, in those trying moments when he supported the suspended doctor, that little gentleman had offered many inducements for him to hold fast. When questioned he responded chiefly with a cavernous and mysterious smile, only saying:

Master Dr. Jex is a gentleman; starch in or starch out, he's de gentleman straight.

And brother John, who is somewhat acquainted with slang, said, with a great laugh, Well, old man, you had a bully chance to judge, so you must be right.

IN AUNT MELY'S CABIN.

TWELVE o'clock and a starless night, the sky bending so close to earth that one might fancy the very steam of the world's passions condensed in the black clouds that rolled heavily across it: no sound save the ceaseless, soft plashing of the Mississippi waves. Suddenly a light wind rose: a piercing shaft of moonlight struck through the clouds, falling on the black letters over a beer−shop, and idealizing to purple and fine linen some fluttering rags that hung from a dingy tenement−house. The wind grew stronger; the clouds were blown into wild shapes; the shaft of moonlight melted out into a broad sheet of silver.

A steep bluff overhung the river; sloping away from it were the long, curving streets of a Southern city. A flight of stone steps led from its highest point to a flat level, where new workshops, ruins of burnt houses, and long cotton−sheds were crowded together. It was a damp, dirty place. People called it Hell's Half−Acre, and in the day it justified its name. But the moon denies her gift of beauty to naught, and to−night this most melancholy half−acre seemed to have a better right to be. One noticed then twenty−four slim white pillars, Corinthian in design, that fire had left standing from some stately public building. The moonbeams broke into a thousand different shapes in the little inlets where the river had pushed its way in. The shapeless ruins were imposing in the half−light, and heavy−scented flowers grew above them, mingling their odors with the sweet, fresh smell of new timber at the planing−mill. And the river by daylight a vulgar, muddy stream now flowed in wide, mysterious

grandeur, with distant gleams of silver on its slow waves.

Across the river, on the line of another State, was a little town, so white and simple and still that it might have been the home of moths and shadows. But as the moon's light grew clearer a keen eye might have seen a man's form standing at the water's edge, and a keen ear might have heard the sound of a body falling into water. The river was narrow at this point, and a man could easily swim across it, as this one was doing. His body undulated under the waves like a snake's. His head, barely visible above the water, was small, and the wet hair clung closely about it like a cap. When he had landed he stood for a moment shivering with cold and casting quick, nervous glances around him, as if he had been pursued. Then he walked irresolutely toward a cotton−shed, and throwing himself on the ground, partly sheltered by a bale of cotton, he fell asleep.

The sun rose gloomily, and in its light the place that had been almost poetic the night before showed all its squalid ugliness. The street near the river, once a fine and fashionable promenade, now seemed built of the very skeletons of houses, so busily had decay been at work, and so little had been done to stop its advance. The very flowers had lost their purity, and hung heavy with little particles of cotton that had blown upon them from the wagons continually passing, and blackened in the coal−dust. It had caught in the delicate lily−cups; it weighed down the roses; and in the broad foliage of the arbor−vitae it had woven itself in and out until each piece was like a fan. With the sun awoke noisy life. The cotton−drays raced along Front Row, their black drivers standing in them, hatless, shoeless, and ragged, urging on their mules with discordant cries. The bleating of goats was heard from the darkey settlement on the side of the cliff as queer old aunties and uncles hobbled out to milk them. Down on the flat the whir of machinery began; grimy men flung oaths or rough jests at each other; flatboats appeared on the river; and the air grew dense with smoke from the mills.

Through all the man sleeping under the cotton−shed did not stir, a deep exhaustion seemed to hold him hand and foot. The sun found him out and dried his jeans clothing, warmed his bare feet, and even tried to pierce through his cold body to the dark, soggy earth on which it rested. It beamed on his close hair until it blew from his face, light in color and curling at the ends. The face was one common enough in a malarious country a yellow, lean, sharp face; besides this, it was a young, weak, passionate face. The sunbeams were kind and did not wake' him. The eyelids pressed close upon the eyes, and the lashes lay motionless on the thin cheeks.

After a time a negro passed near the cotton−shed one of the kind called roustabouts in that part of the country people who live in a happy−go−lucky sort of way, dependent from day to day on stray jobs or stray thefts, never losing flesh or vivacity, never appearing otherwise than supremely content with life and their lot. This one had his work for the day. A bag was hung over his shoulder, and he was picking up the loose cotton that had fallen from burst bales preparatory to cleansing it for the gin. He saw the sleeping man, and became instinct with the natural hostility that the negro seems to have for the poor white.

Git up from dar, you lazy tramp! he shouted, and, seeing that the man did not stir, he picked up a bit of coal and threw it with such precision as to hit the sleeper on his sunburnt neck.

He started up and stared around him with a gleam of ferocity in his eyes.

The negro laughed loudly. What gyardin did you come outen? he said. You's enough to skeer de crows, you is.

The man took no notice of his gibes, but staggering, to his feet walked slowly across the flat and up the stone steps. Now and then he put his hand to his head in a confused way. I must git across the city, he muttered: there's good hiding in some o' the slums 'round the bayou.

He turned up Promenade Street, walking with slow, dragging steps. Seems to me I'm powerful weak, he muttered. Has it been longer'n a day sence I tuk my food?

Chickee! chick! chick! chick!

He stopped at the sweet sound of a child's voice, and looking over a broken gate saw a little blue−eyed girl feeding chickens by the wood−pile in the yard.

Sissy, can you give me a glass of buttermilk?

Mamma! mamma! called the child, here's a man wants some buttermilk.

He will have to wait for it, answered a voice from the house: the churn won't be ready for half an hour.

Come in, said the little maid, running to the gate and holding it open. You can wait a while, can't you? Here's a seat on the wood−pile.

He followed her like one in a dream.

She stood up before him, a straight, sweet shape, and began to talk. You don't look very nice, said she, her eyes wandering over his torn, soiled garments, with bits of coal and dirt falling away from the side that had lain next to the earth; but I s'pose you were a soldier.

No, little girl; I never wuz a soldier.

I'm s'prised to hear that. My papa was a colonel, and nearly all the men that come here and and ask for things, you know, b'longed to some big general's army Lee's or Forrest's or Hood's. I can't remember all the names.

He said nothing, and little Miss Delicacy feared she had hurt his feelings. Do you like sugar−cakes? she said, soothingly.

He nodded his head.

The trouble is she drew nearer and lowered her voice confidentially there are so many boys about, and they are *dreadful* fellows for sugar−cakes. They hardly *ever* leave any till next day. But I'll see about it.

She disappeared behind the honeysuckle that hung over the porch, but she did not come back. The sound of tempestuous sobbing came from within, and it was plain she had either been disappointed of the sugar−cakes or, as was more likely, forbidden a social chat with a tramp.

The man took no heed of her absence. He lifted his eyes and looked across the river to Hopefield, the little town so white and still. But to him it seemed to run with blood and ring with sound. His teeth clinched together; his eyes glowed in his set face like eyes in discolored marble. Close by the river−bank was his home, a log−house, weather−boarded, that he had built himself. He could see the zigzag line of the fence and the hollyhocks growing by the window. He had planted them there two years ago, when he married little Betty Hill and brought her home. What those years had been to him he and God knew. He was poor, but Betty had made him love his daily work. He was ignorant, but Betty had been his teacher. He was rough, but Betty was fine. That for which men have

Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes,

had come to him pressed down and running over. And now

Wrenching his mind from that horrible now, he threw back his thoughts to the early days of his love and hers: She allays belonged ter me. I learnt her ter swim an' ter fish an' ter row. We gethered hick'ry−nuts in th' same basket, an' I marked every sweet−gum tree she wanted, so 't not a boy in Hopefield dared ter tech one of 'em. I cut her name in my arm; and once I took a stran' of her long black hair and sewed it over my heart s deep that the blood run every time I drawed the needle out. Little Betty! Little Betty! Wuz ther' ever a time I didn't love her? I toted her in my arms when she wuz a teenchy baby, an' I watched her year by year growin' purtier, an' straighter 'n a saplin' in the woods. She never growed very tall; on'y as high as my heart, she said. She had sech a purty way of sayin' things! nimble with her tongue as she wuz with her feet in a reel. His lips parted with something like a smile.

Here is the buttermilk, said the child's voice, and the sugar−cakes too; but I had to cry for them.

He started to his feet, and, taking the bowl, drank the milk thirstily, a faint color coming under his brown skin. But he never took his eyes from the Hopefield shore; and as he drained the last drop he saw three men walking rapidly down toward the river. His heart gave a wild leap: the bowl dropped from his hands. They're on my track, he said, hoarsely.

No use now to hurry across the city to hide in the slums: it was too late for that plan. In his pressing need a sudden thought came to him of an old black woman who lived near. She had belonged to a minister's family in Hopefield. He had known her all his life; she had made a pet of him, and would befriend him now.

He walked quickly out of the yard toward the hovel that Aunt Mely called home. It was a chance whether he ever reached it, for he stopped at the steepest height of the bluff, and for one mad moment thought how easy it would be to crush out fear, remorse, agony, life, in one short, sharp point of time. But he drew back and walked on with long, quick steps.

Aunt Mely's house was poised on the side of the bluff like a rocking−stone. Back of it was a struggling garden, protected from the goats by a queer sort of fence made of all the refuse stuff Aunt Mely could find broad planks and narrow planks, old fence−rails, sticks of wood and brush−heaps. Of the house itself you could not say that one part was worse than another. It seemed to hang together by attenuated threads. Samson in his days of bibs and long−gowns could have brought it about his ears with a vigorous infantine kick. The chimney was remarkable. It had been daubed with mud and stuck with clay, and on the outside Aunt Mely had nailed a shining sheet of tin.

The old woman was bustling about in−doors when a shadow came between her and the sun. She looked up and saw a man's form in the door− way: Lor' bless my soul, Phil Vickers! is dat you? What's de matter wid you?

I'm in great trouble, Aunt Mely. I want you to help me hide me.

Hide you? Why, what hev you been a−doin'?

He pushed his way beside her into the room.

She followed him and shut the door. What have you done, boy? she repeated.

I've killed Tom Jack, if you must know.

Killed Tom Jack! Phil Vickers, you God−forsaken creetur'! what did you do dat for?

His eyes sparkled; he forgot his terror; his voice rose to a shrill key and shook in speaking: Aunt Mely, tell me this: have I been a good husband to Betty Hill?

Yes, you have, Phil: come what may, I'll always b'ar witness to dat.

I've loved her, Aunt Mely, and *you* know it. She lay on my heart day an' night. I thought she wuz a true wife to me.

So she wuz, Phil so she wuz. Many an' many's de time she said ter me, 'My Phil's de sweetest, kindest boy dat ever lived.'

He broke into a howl of anguish: Now you hear what that counts up ten I got home Monday night from a day's huntin': I had a deer on my shoulder. It wuz the day befo' Moddy−Gras, you know; we wuz comin' across next day to see the sights. I had been whistlin' loud, but I stopped when I got in hollerin' reach o' the house, and slipped to the winder to see what Little Betty wuz doin'. An' thar, sho' as thar's a livin' God, standin' by my wife, his arm round her waist, wuz a man! Things swum befo' my eyes for a minnit; then the pine−knots blazed up an' I saw Tom Jack's face. I watched 'em. They were talkin' an' laughin' quite frien'ly , Tom struttin' about like a dancin'−jack. Then he comes up to her again, pulls at her dress an' kisses her on the bare neck, she a−laughin' an' a−strugglin' with him, as she'd done with me a thousan' times. I lifted my rifle, thankin' God there wuz a load in it, an' shot. I'd as lief ha' hit 'em both; but on'y Tom Jack dropped, and Little Betty stood screamin' over him an' wringin' her han's. I flung down my rifle an' run to the woods. I wuz thar all that night an' yesterday, walkin', walkin', walkin', till another night come; an' I swum the river befo' sun−up this mornin'.

God forgive you, Phil! God forgive you fo' yer sin!

Sin, is it? sin to shoot a man who wants to reap a crop I've fenced in? Don't talk to me about sin, old Mely Mitchell!

Thar! thar! poor boy! Don't look at me so wild! What kin I do for you, honey?

Whatever you do must be done soon, he said, sullenly. I saw some men leave Hopefield as I started here: they must be nearly across.

I ain't got a place on de yearth to hide you, Phil, 'thouten you kin git in de chimley: they'll never think o' lookin' dar. You kin keep in all day, and steal off when night comes. I think you'd better take ter de woods ag'in.

I won't do that not unless I want ter go blind crazy.

See 'f you kin crawl in de chimley. Dar ain't been no fire in it for a month o' Sundays. It smokes so bad I can't cook nothin'. You kin stan' up, an' I'll put a cheer in de fireplace, and pile it up wid my ole clo'es, ter hide yer legs.

Look out, Aunt Mely, an' see 'f they're comin'.

She opened .the door cautiously: I see three men at de landin', Phil, but dey ain't a−comin' dis way. Dey's struck across Front Row.

They're off my track. They'll look for me in the very slums I meant to hide in.

For all dat, dis ain't a safe place fo' you, Phil.

Do you want to turn me out of your house?

God forbid, you po' boy! Stay and git what comfort you kin. Stretch yerself out on dat bed afar and try ter rest. I'll watch out fo' you.

He threw himself down and tried to sleep, but in vain. His blood began to burn and race in his veins; pain struck at him with a thousand whips. He held his hands over his mouth to keep himself from screaming aloud.

Toward noon he heard, as from some far−off place, Aunt Mely's voice: Phil, honey, dey're comin' back.

He sprung up and thrust his head recklessly out of the door.

Git back, Phil! said the old woman, sharply. I kin tell you all afar is to tell. Dey's stoppin' now at a house on Promenade Street. Dey's drawin' water at de well by de wood−pile, an' a little gal is talkin' to dem.

She gave me some buttermilk this mornin': she saw the way I come. I'm a lost man!

No, you ain't. You jes git right in de chimley, an' I'll deal wid 'em if dey come r'arin' roun' dis house.

By the time he was well in the hiding−place the men had turned toward the negro quarter. Aunt Mely sat down and went to work quietly on a patchwork quilt, ready to receive them with proper surprise and dignity. But when they came the work fell from her hands, her skin turned ashen−gray, she shook in every limb; for Tom Jack was the first man to burst into the room Tom Jack, strong in virile life, angry−eyed, a long knife stuck in his belt.

Aunt Mely was a shrewd old soul; she recovered herself quickly, and said nothing. Phil sartinly shot somebody, she thought, an' I'll jes hol' my tongue till I see how things is gwine ter turn out.

Where is Phil Vickers? said Tom, in a voice husky with passion.

Phil Vickers? Why, I ain't seed de boy sence I went over to his house 'bout a week back to git a settin' of eggs Miss Betty 'd been savin' up for me.

Now, come, Aunt Mely, said one of the party, good−humoredly, you needn't lie. Little Sally Polk saw him come right in yer do'. We left a p'liceman huntin' him in the city, an' wuz on our way back to Hopefield when the child told us whar he were.

O my soul! What's poor Phil done dat you're all a−huntin' him like a pack o' houn's?

Phil's had a little shootin' affair, said the good−natured man.

Who'd he shoot?

Who'd he shoot? cried Tom Jack. The sweetest, brightest creetur' the Lord ever made my sister, Nancy Jack.

In the dreadful silence that followed a convulsive, gasping sound was heard. The next moment Phil Vickers sprung out, his hair and clothes covered with mould, like a spectre from the grave. Is this true, boys? Did I kill Nancy Jack? he said, in a harsh, hollow voice.

Jack sprung at him, his knife flashing in the air. But he was caught and held back by one of the men with him: Softly, Tom, softly! Let Phil have fair play.

Fair play for a man who shot down my sister in cold blood?

As God sees me, Tom, I thought it wuz you kissin' Little Betty.

That's an argyment, Tom, said the third man, who had a long, sad face, and who lingered over his words as if he were patting them that's an argyment as'll go down with the jury. It wuz night; you an' Nancy are alike in the face; you've got no whiskers, you know, Tom. How wuz Phil to know that it wuz Nancy a−showin' herself off to Little Betty, dressed up in your clo'es for a Moddy−Gras frolic?

As he heard a curious change came over Phil. His knees began to shake pitiably, his body to collapse. He held out his hand as if trying to steady himself, and, grasping only air, fell slowly to the floor, saying, in a stifled voice, Let Tom kill me: I ain't fit to live.

The hangman will do it for me, said Tom, with a snarl.

Is de po' gal dead? said Aunt Mely.

No, she ain't dead she ain't deed *yit*, rejoined the sad−faced man. We couldn't git a doctor yisterday, de town wuz in such a swivel. But Dr. Taylor he come over las' night, an' is thar now. He ain't foun' de bullet. He says Nancy's in a cosmotose state.

Now, while this talk was going on some one else was crossing the river from Hopefield a sturdy little woman with black hair and eyes. She was seated in the exact centre of a knife−bottomed boat that cut through the water fast as a bird flies. With her single oar flashing into the water on either side she made quick time across the Mississippi; and now she came flying into Aunt Mely's cabin, a little vehement whirlwind of a creature, with a voice as high and sweet as a birdnote.

Oh! thank goodness! you are all here! she cried, brokenly. Then she caught Tom Jack's hand: Oh, Tom, she is saved! The doctor has found the bullet. He says she is all right now will need nothing but good nursing; an' that, you know, she'll have. I won't leave her night nor day till she's on her feet; and Little Betty burst into tears, in which, perhaps, all wanted to join.

How'd you come here, chile? said Aunt Mely.

I wuz so anxious about Nancy that I couldn't think of anything else till the doctor had spoke. Then my mind mistrusted me about Tom. I asked where he wuz, an' they told me he had taken his bowie−knife an' gone over to the city. I wuz afeard he had got on Phil's track. I jumped in the canoe and rushed over just blindly. But the first man I met on the Flat said he'd seen some Hopefield men go into Aunt Mely's cabin. So I came right here. Thank God for it! thank God for it!

It's a good thing for Phil that Nancy 'll git well, remarked the sad man, slowly tearing off a strip of tobacco from a ragged roll; the law can't do nothin' to him now, 'thouten it shets him up a while for 'sault an' battery.

His account with me ain't settled yet, said Tom Jack, ominously. Look to yourself, Phil Vickers! Blood's got to pay for blood!

Oh, Tom! Tom! cried Little Betty, the tears streaming down her face, forgive us. We didn't mean to do you any harm. Phil would ha' died a thousand deaths befo' he'd ha' harmed a hair of Nancy's head. Tom, no wife nor child nor sister will ever pray for you and bless you as I will if you'll just shake hands friendly and say, 'Phil, I pardon you.' Nancy would do it; I know she would. Oh, what can I say to you? I'll go on my knees to you, Tom.

She fell on her knees and lifted her warm, wet, beautiful eyes to Tom's face.

Get up, child, he said, hoarsely. I'll let him go, an' when Nancy's on her legs ag'in I'll shake hands.

He turned abruptly and left the house.

Phil's head fell on his breast: You'd better have let him kill me, Little Betty. I ain't fit to be the husband of such as you.

But Little Betty drew the tired head to her tender heart and looked defiantly round upon the others, as if throwing all the splendor of her faithful love between Phil and any look of contempt or blame.

THE CASE OF ELIZA BLEYLOCK.

CAPTAIN JAMES PETERS, riding home from a raid into the moonshine counties, stopped at Jared's store and asked for a drink. A jug was taken from the shelf, and a finger's−length of clear yellow whiskey poured out.

No moonshine in this sto', you see, captain, remarked Mr. Jared.

Humph! and the captain's keen eyes glanced toward the loungers in and about the store. Reckon if I took a notion I could unearth some moonshine, an' spot some moonshiners not fur off.

Captain, you mustn't be so suspicious.

Suspicious? Reckon I shouldn't earn my pay 'f I wuzn't. S'picion 's mighty good thing for a man−hunter. My game's shy. But I've my eye on mo' than knows of me. Some folks 'll find thar b'ilers smashed when they dunno I'm aroun'.

Silence. Some of the young men shrugged their shoulders. One drawled out at last that he didn't know as anybody keered three−jumps of a louse fur Jim Peters or his threatenin's.

Come, come, said a cunning−looking old man; don't let's have no words. We're all peaceful folks, captain, in this here settlement powerful peaceful. Ter be sho', we don't like nobody a−foolin' round our business. We come from Car'liny more'n a hundred ye'rs ago, an' here we've lived peaceful an' orderly ever sence a−livin' an' a−dyin' an' a−marryin' an' a−breedin'

An' a−learnin' th' use of th' shot−gun, interposed Dick Oscar, quietly.

I'm a Tennessee man myself, said Captain Peters, an' I ruther think I know how t' use a shot−gun. An' I've got a rifle that's a sixteen−shooter.

There was a general movement of interest.

Let's have a look at it, captain.

It don't go out o' my hand. But you can look much 's you please. Ain't she a beauty, now?

They crowded around, patting and praising the gun as if it were human. And there was a general murmur of assent when old man Welch exclaimed, Ain't it a pity, boys, ter see sech a rifle as that thronged away on a damned Gov'ment officer?

Captain Peters only laughed. He was very good−humored, this mountain terror, except when, as they would say, his blood was up. Then it was as safe to meet a starving tiger.

Seems to me 's if the captain has somethin' on his mind, remarked Mrs. Riggs that same evening.

The Riggses lived at Bloomington, and the captain and his family were paying them a visit, preparatory to settling in the same place. Mrs. Riggs was a bustling young woman, born in quite another part of the State, as she would tell you, with an air; no mopin' mountain blood in me. She was the third wife of her husband a sanctimonious old chap, with his long white beard, the ends of which he used to assist meditation, as a cow chews its cud.

James Riggs, his wife had said when he courted her, it's my opinion you *talked* them two previous women to death; but if you get me, mark one thing you'll get your match. And he did.

The Riggses were extremely sensible of the honor of having Captain Peters in their house. Dom Pedro and Cetywayo rolled into one could not have been watched with more solicitude. Had not his name been in every paper in the Union, and his portrait in a New York journal? That the eyes of the nation were fixed upon him Peters himself did not doubt; and it was asserted through the country that he was in close correspondence with the President.

Jim's been a−broodin', said Mrs. Peters a moon−faced woman with dull blue eyes ever sence he went inter this business. I've wished time 'n' ag'in he'd stuck to blacksmithin', for I've suffered a thousan' deaths with him off a−hangarin'* over the mountains.

He wuz called of the Lord, said Mr. Riggs, and his hand must not be stayed. The inikity of man *shell* be put down in the land.

Ye es, drawled the captain, I'm a−goin' to bust up the 'stillin' business in Tennessee. But I'm plagued about them Bleylock boys. I can't ketch 'em nohow.

A knock at the door, and a young fellow came in and shook hands eagerly with the captain. His name was Maddox.

* Wandering. Captain Peters had picked him up in Nashville, and employed him on trial.

I wuz jest a−speakin' of the Bleylocks, he said. I'm pretty sure they've got a still somewhar. They look me in the eye too powerful innocent to be all right. Now, I've got a notion Maddox drew himself up, alert, watchful as a listening sentinel. What can't be done one way must be done another, said Captain Peters, slowly.

And rightly you speak, said Mr. Riggs, as he spat out his beard; it's the Lord's work, an' be done it must, with every wepping known to man.

I knew it! I knew it, captain! cried Mrs. Riggs. I knew you had somethin' on your mind. You're a−schemin' somethin' great. I see it in your eye.

It remained in the captain's eye, as far as Mrs. Riggs was concerned, for the captain took Mr. Maddox out−of−doors, where they talked in whispers, and Mrs. Riggs berated her lord for having driven them away with his tongue.

A few days later a peddler stopped at Bleylock's and asked for a drink of water. Old Mother Bleylock sent Eliza to the spring for a fresh bucketful; and the peddler, after refreshing himself, opened his pack.

'Pears 's if we oughtn't ter trouble you, she said, 'cause we can't buy a pin's wuth.

Jest for the pleasure, ma'am, said the gallant peddler.

The pack was opened, and three pairs of eyes grew big with delight.

'F you'll wait till par comes I'll make him buy me that collar, said Janey, the younger of the Bleylock girls.

P'raps Dick Oscar 'd buy you a present 'f he wuz here, suggested Eliza.

If 'tain't makin' too free, I'd like to say I admire Dick Oscar's taste, said the peddler, with an admiring glance.

Janey responded with, Oh! you hush! and a toss of her head; and old Mother Bleylock said, The boys most generully always paid Janey a good deal 'f attention.

She possessed a bold prettiness, this mountain pink. Brown−skinned, black−eyed, red−lipped, and a way of dropping her head on her swelling neck, and looking mutiny from under her heavy brows. Eliza was a thin slip of a girl, with a demure but vacant look in her blue eyes, and a shy, nervous manner.

I'll tell you the truth, ma'am, remarked the peddler to the mother: you could take these girls o' yours to Nashville, an' people in th' streets would follow them for their good looks. An' that's Heaven's own truth. All yo' family, these two?

Lor! no; I've got three boys.

All at home farmin', I s'pose?

Yaas.

Long road to take their crops to market.

I ain't never heerd no complaint.

Now, 'bout these goods o' mine, said the peddler; 'f you could put me up for a few days, we might make a trade. I'm 's tired 's a lame horse, and wouldn't want nothin' better'n to rest right here.

I'd like nothin' better'n to take you. But th' ain't no use sayin' a word till par gits home. He ain't no hand fur strangers.

Well, I won't be a stranger longer'n I can help, said the agreeable peddler. My name's Pond Marcus Pond Nashville boy; but a rollin' stone, you know. I've peddled books an' sewin'−machines, an' no end of a lot of traps ginerally. Fond o' travel, you see; but jest 's steady as old Time. Never drink when I travel; promised my mother I wouldn't.

'Tis a good thing, said Mother Bleylock, with energy. I do despise to see a fuddled man. Whiskey ain't fit fur nothin' but ter fatten hogs on.

Father Bleylock came home, and, beyond a stare and a silent nod, took little notice of the peddler. He was a tall man, thin, taciturn, and yellow, and with a neck so small that his head presented the appearance of being stuck on with a pin.

He lighted his pipe, and after a soothing interval of smoking, Peddler 'd like to stop over a period, said his wife.

Puff, puff. Don't see no objection. Puff, puff.

And a gentle hilarity agitated the bosoms that yearned over the peddler's pack.

Mr. Pond, as he had promised, soon ceased to be a stranger. The old man discoursed on the grievances of taxes, and the old woman, after the manner of mothers, talked about her daughters.

My gals is eddicated, she would say been over t' Cookville months an' months a−schoolin'. But, lor! thar's some folks you can't weed the badness out'n, an' Janey's a spitfire, she is. Seems 's if Dick Oscar wants to have her, but he acts kinder curious about it blow hot, blow cold. Dunno. Now, Lizy is different. Can't tell why, less'n 'tis that I went to camp−meetin' an' perfessed a while befo' she wuz born. Somehow she's always been delicater an' quieter like 'n any of my childern.

The Bleylock boys, easy, rollicking fellows, treated the peddler very much as if he had been a harmless though unnecessary cat about the house, and were surprised when Dick Oscar, dropping in one evening, informed them that they were all a pack of fools for takin' in a stranger so free and easy.

Why, I ain't paid no more attention to th' man 'n if he'd a−been a preacher, said Sam Bleylock; seems 's if th' ain't no harm t' him.

He's a very God−fearin' man, said Eliza, softly, an' a powerful reader o' the Bible.

'F you'll take *my* say so, you'll git quit of him, said Dick Oscar.

He's got such beautiful taste! said Mother Bleylock. It's as good 's goin' to th' city to look at his things.

I see he's been a−dressin' you up, said Oscar, with a sneer at the new ribbons the girls wore round their necks.

Janey sprung up. Her face reddened. In an instant she had torn off the ribbon and stamped her foot on it. That's how much I care for him an' his ribbins! she cried.

Don't fly quite off the handle, said Mr. Oscar, coolly. Evidently he shared her mother's opinion that Miss Janey was a spitfire.

Poor Janey! She had hoped to please her lover by her scorn of the peddler's gift, but she was coming to the conclusion that he was a hard man to please. She was a passionate young animal, and she had thrown herself into his arms with a readiness that robbed herself of her graces. He liked to sting and stroke her alternately, and was about as unsatisfactory a lover as Janey could have found on the Cumberland. But she liked him, saw with his eyes, thought with his thoughts. Naturally she turned against the peddler, and from this time set herself to watch him.

That harmless young man in the mean time was doing what he could. He wandered about the country selling such little things as the people could buy, pumping the Bleylock boys, and making love to the Bleylock girls. The pumping process was rewarded with about as much success as would attend fishing for a soul through the eye of a skeleton. In the love−making there was more hope.

Janey was accessible to flattery, and encouraged him with little looks of fire. But there was something in her eyes he did not trust, and he was a wary man, the peddler. Besides, she slapped his face when he tried to kiss her. But he soon grew to believe that Eliza simple, unsuspicious, serious would be as clay in his hands.

Chance favored Miss Janey. She was bathing, one warm day, in the creek that ran out from the spring, when she saw Eliza and the peddler coming, like Jack and Jill, to fetch a pail of water. Being naked, Janey could not get away; but she slid along to a cool inlet overhung with tree branches, and so hidden, waited for them to do their errand. Of course they stopped to talk.

That pink ribbon becomes your black hair mightily, said the peddler.

Eliza blushed. We're just country girls, you know, Mr. Pond; we don't have many pretty things. Seems 's if the boys don't have any money left after buyin' the sugar an flour an' molasses an' things.

Meat, I s'pose? said the practical peddler.

No; we raise our own meat. Par has a powerful lot o' hogs.

So!

But I expect you don't take much interest in country life, Mr. Pond?

Why, my dear and Mr. Pond slipped his arm around Eliza I'd like the best in the world to settle down in a country just like this. A fellow gets tired trampin' around. But I'd want two things to make me happy.

Eliza looked at him with happy confidence.

First, a little wife 'at wuz gentle in her ways, an' a good, religious girl, an' one with black hair, to set off the pink ribbons I'd buy for her, an' a fleet foot, and a red mouth.

Here Mr. Pond came to a full stop with a kiss.

And the other thing? with a bright blush.

The peddler grew practical again. Well, it's nothin' more'n some way to make a livin'. Now, say I married a sweet girl up the Cumberland, and made a little crop. It's too far to git it to market. I *might* turn it into whiskey, but lately Gov'ment's turned meddler, an' is a−breakin' stills right an' left through the country.

They do hide 'em sometimes, said Eliza, in a half−whisper, so's a blood−hound could hardly scent 'em. An' a very good business it is, an' the hogs live on the mash.

Do you know of any such stills, my little darlin'?

But she drew back a little. Ef I do know of any, she said, I've promised not to tell of 'em.

Not to the man as is goin' to be your husband?

Not to him until he *is* my husband. And blushing, but resolute, Eliza filled her pail and started for the house.

Under the water Janey clinched her hands. Dick was right, she thought; and I see his game. He's a spy, and Eliza's a fool.

She knew that she had heard enough to justify her lover in his suspicions, enough to put them all on their guard. A passionate exultation fired her blood as she thought of the service she should render Dick Oscar, his praise, the reward of his rude kisses.

But, alas for Janey! something had ruffled her sweetheart's temper when next they met. Before she could approach the subject of which she was full stinging words had passed between them.

Dick, said Janey, hoarsely, d'ye mean that you're goin' back from your word that you ain't agoin' to marry me?

Marry hell! said Mr. Oscar. And he walked off.

I want to speak t' you, said Janey that night to the peddler. Can you git up in th' morning befo' th' folks is stirrin'?

Of course I can, when it's to meet a gal like you.

Privately he wondered at her pallor and lurid eyes.

Morning came. As the stars were drowsily getting out of the sun's way Janey and the peddler met by the spring.

You needn't lie to me, said she, harshly. I've found you out. You're up the Cumberland spyin' for wild−cat stills. I'll take you to one.

But, my dear, is this a trap? I'm nothin' but a poor harmless peddler.

Come, then, my harmless peddler, said the girl, with a sneer, an' I'll show you somethin' t' make your mouth water.

She struck through the woods, and he followed, alternately blessing and wondering at his luck. What thread led her he knew not. Fallen logs lay in the way, thickets opposed, foliage dense as the massed green in Dewing's Morning hid all signs of path, but on she went, easily, as if she were illustrating the first line of prepositions in Lindley above, around, amidst, athwart obstacles of every kind. And finally, girdled and guarded by trees and rocks, was the hidden still, where the dull, cold ear of corn was changed into the flowing moonshine that maketh glad the heart of man.

The peddler could hardly keep back a shout. He had won his spurs. It was a much larger concern than he had expected. Some hogs were rooting about the sodden earth. The monotonous dripping of water mingled with the grunts of these poetic animals.

Janey leaned against a rock, breathing heavily. The peddler thought he would about as soon touch a wild−cat as to speak to her. Nevertheless he did.

B'long t' your folks? he said.

'T b'longs to Dick Oscar, an' you know it! said the girl, fiercely. Now I'm goin' back home.

You don't know of any more such, said the insatiate peddler, lyin' 'round loose up here? pearls among swine, so to speak.

I've done enough. An', look here, keep your tongue

between yo' teeth. Tell that *I* fetched you here, an' you won't see many more sun−ups with them spyin' eyes.

Mr. Pond was a tolerable woodsman, and he led Captain Peters and his scouts to the mountain−still without trouble. They were all there the Bleylock boys, the father, and young Oscar. They were hard at work, and, surprised, were handcuffed without the firing of a gun.

Who so crestfallen as the toiling, moiling moonshiners? Who so jubilant as the long−whiskered captain? He would have sung a paean had he known how. As it was, he chewed a great deal of tobacco, and unbuttoned his flannel shirt for expansion.

The prisoners were halted at the Bleylock cabin for baggage and good−byes. They were to be taken to the penitentiary, and would need a change of socks.

Mrs. Bleylock and Eliza wept and moaned their fate; but Janey was still, brown lids veiling the dull fire of her eyes.

Janey, my girl, said Oscar, drawing her apart, I spoke up rough to you t' other day. But don't you mind it. 'Twarn't nuthin' but jealousy.

Her eyes softened. Mountain pinks, as well as some fine ladies, consider jealousy as a tribute to their charms.

Perhaps I'll never come back, said he.

She seized him by the arm.

Dick, what can they do t' you?

Dunno. Most likely I'll kill somebody tryin' to git away, and be strung.

Janey burst into tears.

Shouldn't wonder 'f you married one o' the Jareds, he said, piling on the gloom.

Dick Oscar, I promised to marry *you*, an' *I* don't go back from my word.

No, an' I don't! cried Dick. There ain't as pretty a shaped girl as you on the Cumberland; an' if ever I do git back

He whispered the rest in Janey's ear, and she clung to him, blushing a deep, deep rose.

'S jest one thing I want to know, said old Bleylock, as they tramped to Nashville: how 'd you find us?

The captain laughed.

Been entertainin' a peddler, haven't you? Which one o' your gals 'd he make up to?

Father and brothers swore. Dick Oscar nodded to his discernment, with human triumph.

A few days later a young girl walked into Nashville who had never been in a city before. She asked but one question the way to the Governor's house. That accessible mansion was readily found; doors were swinging open; and, announced by a sleepy darkey, Janey Bleylock stood in the Governor's presence.

With a fine and courteous manner that gentleman listened, struck by her figure, her full voice, and passionate eyes. He promised to use his influence with the President to procure a pardon for Dick Oscar, and Janey was allowed to go to the prison with the cheering news.

The mountain girl was heard of in high circles. Hearts beat warmly in lovely Southern bosoms, and they made a heroine of Janey.

Why don't you marry here? said a beautiful enthusiast, who had called to see Janey, and kissed her, because she knew so well how to love. Marry here, and I'll give you a wedding dress.

So we will, said Dick Oscar, when he was out of prison.

And Janey went home a wife, as if the stars had been diamonds, and strung like a larkspur chain for her neck father, brothers, husband, sheltering her in their love.

Mrs. Bleylock and Eliza ran to meet them. Eliza thought perhaps some one else would come with them. Had not her lover left her with a kiss and a promise to come back with a gold ring?

The pink ribbon was round her neck. Her lips were parted in a happy, vacant smile.

The old chap whose head looked as if it were stuck on with a pin was in advance. He thrust out his arm as Eliza drew near. Don't you speak to me!

Pappy!

Damn your tattlin' tongue! Keep away from my hands!

The smile had gone; the vacant look spread over the face that turned helplessly to her brothers.

You ought to be whipped like a nigger! said Sam Bleylock. What you tell that peddler 'bout Oscar's still for? Might 'a known he wuz foolin' you.

I didn't tell where the still wuz.

Hoh! you lie too. And her father, passing by, struck her with the back of his hand.

Shame on you, pappy! and Janey ran to her sister, over whose lips blood was pouring.

Her husband drew Janey away. Don's touch her, he said, with a look of disgust; she ain't fit.

A wild, terrified look swept over Janey's face. Should she grasp at the wind blowing in the tree−tops above her? She caught Dick Oscar's arm, holding it fiercely. Here was something to clasp, to cling to. Her soul shrivelled in her ardent body.

Afterward Eliza Bleylock seemed to wither away. She repeated her denial of having been a traitor, but no one ever believed her. She worked hard, and was used roughly. She had never been strong. Sometimes she stole away and nursed

Janey's baby, that seemed to love her; but never when Dick Oscar was at home.

One day, sitting by the spring alone, too weak since a long while to work, she leaned her head against a tree, and, with one moan, too faint to startle the singing birds, she died.

Her mother and Janey dressed her cleanly, and tied about her neck a pink ribbon that they found in her Bible. And she was buried, with very little said about it, in the valley.

THE BRAN DANCE AT THE APPLE SETTLEMENT.

THEY'S mostly Apples in that settle*ment*, said Mr. Jack Officer. When they has a blow out they kind o' jines together, and makes the feathers fly. Lucky thing for preachers 'f they take a camp−meetin' in han'. They'll have the mo'ners lively 'f they have to press every waggin an' old mule in the Cumberland to git 'em thar. They pretty much rule things round here. 'F one of 'em takes a fancy to a good−lookin' girl, the other boys keep away they are shooters, them Apples. Thar's a powerful lot of 'em. Old Grandpa Apple him that started the settle*ment* is a−livin' yet He come over from Carliny some sixty years back, in a canopied waggin, with all he had, includin' his gret−uncle, ready to light out fur Jordan, an' a yeller dog female, that's mothered the best breed o' pups on the mountain. He had two blooded cows, an' a stavin' young woman for a wife; an' calves an' children came's fast's he could house 'em faster too, I reckin, for they had to tent it one hot summer. The boys they growed up, an' the married aroun' the country, an' somehow they've had luck big, smart, han'some families. An' their childern is a−marryin' an' child−bearin'. So, you see, old Grandpa Apple he sees the fourth generation. An' I guess the Lord ain't any pleaseder in surveyin' the earth he has made than that old man in a−countin' Apple noses.

They're goin' to have a bran dance to−morrer over in the settle *ment*. Ever seen a bran dance? 'T's a powerful nice entertainment. Better stop over an' go 'long with me.

We stopped over. Starting the next morning by earliest cock−crow, we reached the Apple Settlement, so exhilarated ah! delicious air of the Cumberland! that we were ready to cut pigeon wings in a bran dance until the bran flew about our ears as dry as the dust of a powdered mummy.

The scene was as animated as one of Hogarth's pictures. Horses, mules, ox−wagons, spring−carts, were huddled at the gate. People were moving about under the trees with the fantastic gravity that hides inward joy. Half a dozen slim young fellows, in blue calico shirts, opening to show their sunburnt throats, were masters of ceremonies. They shook our hands with serious cordiality, and nodded silently to Mr. Officer. They do not say much, these mountain people. How should they? They might be early−language makers, for the few words they know. Jack Officer was garrulous. But, as he said of himself, he was born with the gab. Besides, he read the Bible and a weekly paper.

Grandpa Apple was sitting under a tree in the yard.

Looks like a peeled Apple, *he* does, said Mr. Officer, facetiously.

This startling simile was not inappropriate, the old man was so white and clean. His head was bare, and shone like the snow. A long white beard dropped from his chin, and white overhanging eyebrows almost hid his eyes. His face was white and wrinkled as a yeasty tub of beer. His trousers and shirt were of white linsey, and he was fanning himself with a white turkey−tail fan. He would have served gloriously, backed up in a Christmas window, as Santa Claus, or the Old Year.

In the heart of a lovely grove Grandpa Apple had built his log−cabin. It was so comfortable−looking, so entirely the right sort of house to be set among those trees! The logs were sawed in two, and were worn to a rich polish; the spaces between were new chinked with white mortar. There were many rooms connected by little porches wide as foot−paths. Doors and windows were opened wide. The floors were bare, and freshly scrubbed. There

were beds in every room, four red posters guarding feather−beds of forty−goose power. Woodcuts from newspapers and fashion magazines were gummed on the walls. Althea boughs were thrust into the cavernous depths of the wide fireplaces, and in one room there was a wonderful screen made of hundreds of little pictures.

The kitchen was the place to melt your soul. A mass of coals that would have frightened Daniel glowed in the fireplace. A black pot hung from a crane. Half a dozen ovens were ranged on the hearth, coals under and above them. From time to time the oven lids were lifted with the burnt end of a broom−handle, revealing six little pigs in various stages of brownness. The deities of this place were somewhat wizened Apples, so to speak. They danced once; now they cooked. So passes the glory of mountain pinks. They looked warm, and a little anxious. But now and then they would plunge their heads into a basin of cool water, and come up, like Duffy after the third round, confident and smiling.

The women were nearly all assembled in the room with the screen. They sat against the walls solemnly. They were dressed in clean, bright calicoes, cut as low as the collar−bone. Some vain, dressy creatures wore broad, flat, crocheted collars, and bows shaped like flying birds. The girls were supple and straight, with ankles not offensive to the eye of man; but among the matrons were some queer figures, whose lacks or redundancies were concealed by hoops and set off with trails.

Looks 's if them sort ought to perch in the trees, said Mr. Officer, watching a green calico dragged across the floor.

The young men glowered in through the windows, and poked each other in the sides, making a noise between tongue and cheek not unlike a prolonged cluck to a horse.

Mr. Officer held a violin under his chin. Take your partners! he called, with a piercing scrape of the bow across the strings.

My fust fiddled, remarked Mrs. Officer, but not with the skill'dness of Mr. Officer.

The young men came in and led out the girls; one mountain maid and a pretty one lingered.

You needn't ask me, she said, coquettishly. I've promised to dance the first dance with Mr. Tom Jared.

Should like to know why he don't come, said young Jack Apple; 'pears 's if he ain't in a hurry.

At this instant a little black bullet head was thrust inside the door, and an African voice called, with a subdued chuckle,

Mars' Tom say he done gin out de notion.

Sensation. Up jumped the offended fair, and rushed after the messenger, who ran from the slap to come.

She's as mad as forty thousand wet hens, said Mrs. Officer, mildly.

And we thought she had a right to be.

From the grove sounded the inspiring strain of Billy in the Low Grounds. We found the dancers in a rustic arbor, roofed with green boughs intertwined with hickory withes. Floor there was none save the smooth earth covered three inches deep with wheat−bran. Slightly dampened, it was pleasant

to dance on; but Heaven preserve them when they danced it dry!

Men on one side, women on the other, stiff as a line of bayonets. It was a reel they were to dance. Jack Officer sat on an inverted barrel at one end of the arbor.

Down the middle danced the leading pair, and, separating with an air of being braced for duty, began their advances at opposite ends of the line. It was rather heavy. Here was their stamping ground, and they came down flat−footed. Suddenly a screech created a pleasant confusion.

He trod on my foot a−purpose, he did! cried a woman with elfish black hair, shaking her fist at a young fellow.

Another woman, wife or sweetheart, responded, with a provoking drawl,

What made yer come t' a party bar'−footed?

P'r'aps I'd have as good shoes as you, Jane Oscar, 'f my man wuz in th' ground−hog whiskey business.

Come, come! interposed a peaceful Apple. Speaking o' ground−hog, who'll have a drink?

A blue water−bucket, in which a tin dipper floated, was brought forward.

All took Titanic gulps. There was a smacking of lips such as would have done credit to a tournament of lovers.

Ah−h! That's the true Cumberland punch! cried the refreshed fiddler.

We tasted the Cumberland punch. It was not made on the one, two, three principle, but was even more simple. It was sugarless, lemonless, waterless. It was smoky, strong, and brought tears to the eyes. In short, it was white whiskey mixed with white whiskey.

An' very strengthenin' to the legs it is, said Jack Apple, pressing its offer.

The dancing began again with vigor, with fire and fury. The music sped in tripping notes, and Mr. Officer added hi cracked but cheerful voice:

Oh! whar did you come from?
Knock a nigger down
Oh! whar did you come from,
Jerry *M*iah Brown?

The bran dried under their warm feet and blew up in little swirls. The mountain boys jumped until their heads knocked against the boughs above, and green leaves whirled through the flying dust. Rills of laughter bubbled forth, checked by sudden coughs. Girls' loosened hair caught around the wet necks of their partners.

Don't you weep no more, Sister Mary;
Don't you weep no more, Brother John,

sang Mr. Officer, kicking his feet against the barrel;

For Satan is dead, an' the word is said
For to save you a heavenly crown.
Yes, it is − thump, thump
Yes, it is thump, thump
For to save you a *heavy*−anly crown.

The devil! suddenly exclaimed one of the Bleylock boys.

The dancing stopped; Jack Officer leaped from the barrel.

Look yonder! said young Bleylock, pointing up to the forest roof of the arbor.

There darted a sunbeam, here fluttered a dogwood blossom, and between flower and ray the evil head of a snake wriggled socially.

Clear out! cried Mr. Officer, gesticulating wildly. In two minutes the place was cleared. The bran settled slowly. His snakeship was monarch, but there was naught to survey.

Jack Apple stepped in, however, an open clasp−knife in one hand. He poured some whiskey on the ground, and stooping, rubbed his other hand in the wet earth until it was gummy and black. Whether there was some mysterious significance in this rite, or he did it to secure a firmer grip, we did not know. But he seized the snake just back of the head, and before it could hiss for wonder one snake of the world had been cut in two, and could not come again.

Grandpa Apple had surveyed the scene with interest and pride.

Purty well done, Jack putty well, he said. 'T comes natural to the Apples to hate snakes. D' I ever tell you o' my scrimmage with the snakes on Council Rock?

Reckon 't 'll b'ar tellin' over agin, said Jack Officer's wife.

'Twuz when I fust settled in Tennessee, said Grandpa Apple; an'

I built my house on a rock, like the man in Scripture you know. We moved in befo' it wuz finished, an' the roof wuz but partly shingled. 'Twuz coolish, snappish weather, an' I made rousin' big fires, an' warmed the old rock up. An' one mornin' me an' my wife an' the baby (Jack's grandpa) wuz in bed, an' I heerd a soft, ugly sound hiss−s−s−s−s! The mornin' wuz dark, but I peered with young eyes at the floor, an' it seemed to be a−risin' in curls an' waves put me in mind o' Cany Fork when the wind is of a moderate gustiness. I raised on my elbow, an' I squinted up my eyes for a closer look, an' I said, 'Lord o' creation!' not that I'm a swarin' man; but them wuz snakes! an' that sight wuz enough to make a man throw rocks at his grandmother. What a lot of 'em, little an' big! 's many's there are Apples here to−day. Maybe 'twuz kind o' prophetic. Well, I woke Nancy, an' told her to roll up head, ears, an' baby (Jack's grandpa) in the blankets; an' I crawled up the bed−post an' out through that blessed hole in the roof. Fortunate I had a neighbor with a family o' boys, an' we got on boots, an' with rifles an' whips we went in for the biggest snake−fight ever seen this side o' Jordan. You see, thar nests wuz under the rock, an' my fires had made it warm for 'em, an' they had come a−corkscrewin' out o' thar winter quarters. Tell you we slayed an' we slew! The old woman she stayed kivered up, ekally afeard, she said, o' men an' snakes, we got so bloody an' fierce to kill. I do s'pose we killed a million o' them rattlers they wuz all rattlers.

Oh! oho! Mr. Apple, said Jack Officer; them figgers is too high. 'F you killed one thousand a day, 'twould take you a matter o' twenty years to git shet of a million.

Now, look at that! said the old man, admiringly; and, Mr. Officer's a powerful smart man powerful, said Jack's wife.

It was now noon, and dinner was served in the grove. The table was made of pine boards stretched across chair backs. It was crowded with savory dishes, and as for the dear little pigs, never were pigs so good since the first that it took the burning of a hut to roast.

After dinner the dance began again, but we were tired and spent with laughter. We sought a far−off tree, and, gazed upon admiringly by three small Apples, slept until the bran dance was over.

LAME JERRY.

WITH her baby at her breast, Jane Oscar strolled through the woods one summer morning. There were memories in this young woman's life that sometimes violently agitated her heart, and at such times nothing pleased her more than to plunge into wild depths of the forest, and forget in physical fatigue the pain it angered her to feel. As she stepped on, fleet of foot, with down−dropped eyes, and arms tight as steel around her child, she was startled by a weakly−uttered curse, loosed apparently, like a poisonous odor, from the ground. Pressing on, flung among a heap of weeds beside a fallen tree, she saw a coiled, misshapen figure. An ugly, contorted face lay, with closed eyes, in a piercing sun−ray. It had, probably, been the sun−ray that he had cursed.

Lame Jerry!

Jane! is that Jane Oscar?

Yes. What's the matter?

They've done for me, I'm afeard, Jane.

Who? what? in pity's name.

Them wild−cat devils who helped t' run Welch's still.

You told on 'em to Peters? in a loud, frightened whisper.

Yes. d n them! And they've killed me for it.

Mebbe not, Jerry. I'll go for Dick, an' we'll do all we kin for you.

Then, with a woman's impulse, she took off her cotton dress waist and hung it on a bush in a way to shield Lame Jerry's eyes from the sun; and hiding her neck and her bare breast with her hair and the soft baby form, she hurried home.

It wuz wrong in the boys all wrong, said Dick Oscar, when Jane had told him how she had found Lame Jerry half dead in the woods.

Yes, it *wuz* wrong, said Jane, hotly, an' cruel, too, to treat a man so, just for bein' on the side o' the law.

Yes; they ought to 'a killed him outright, said Mr. Oscar, thoughtfully.

Dick! you don't mean it?

Come, come, my girl, you've got a soft spot in yo' heart fur sneaks, on account o' yo' sister; but you can't expect *me* to stomach 'em.

No, no, said Jane, in a dull, low tone; but you'll be kind to Jerry, won't you?

Lord! yes, Why not? But if he gits up agin, poor old devil! I guess he'll wish we'd 'a left him whar we found him.

That ain't our look−out.

They brought him to their cabin, and nursed him, rudely, but with skill enough to bring him through the fever that set in from his inflamed wounds.

In his raving he called continually for his daughter.

Cordy! Cordy! Cordy! repeated in tones that rang, or moaned, or prayed; but no woman bent over him save brown−eyed Jane Oscar, and faithfully she tended him, while the baby screamed from its cradle in fright at the strange, rough voice.

A conscious day came, and he called to Jane, Does Cordy know?

He looked so pitiful lying there, a stunted, humpbacked figure, his eyes big in his gaunt face, his hair white an old man hated by the mountain people among whom he lived, shaken by nameless fears for the one thing that he loved.

I ain't been able to git word ter Cordy, said Jane Oscar.

D'ye know how she's got on, all alone there, the poor child? She wuz always one to be frightened at shadows and noises.

Jane said nothing.

Why don't you speak, Jane Oscar?

You're mighty weak, Jerry. I don't want you to have no set− back.

An' what could you tell me, woman, to give me a set− back?

Jane put her lips together, and, taking up her baby, gave it the breast.

Might 's well tell him, Janey, said Dick Oscar; it's got to come.

Tell him yourself, then.

Lame Jerry's eyes glared at the two the stolid beings who were hiding some awful secret from him one smoking a cob pipe, the other suckling her child, removed remote from his terrible suffering as heaven from hell.

Whar's my daughter?

Well, old man, said Dick Oscar, she's gone with Discoe.

Are they married?

Not as I's heerd tell.

Oh God! God! God!

Come, Jerry, don't take it so hard. He'll treat her kind.

Treat her kind! I hope he'll kill her! Oh, my lost girl! my little lost Cordy!

I'm powerful sorry for you, Jerry, said Jane, shifting her baby comfortably from one arm to the other.

Keep yo' sorrow till it's asked for.

You know he may marry her, said Dick, putting a fresh coal in his pipe, if she's pleasant to him; he's a nice man, Discoe is.

A d d whiskey−drinking devil!

He's got his faults, but they're the faults of a *man*, said Mr. Oscar, impartially; and he ain't a tattlin' sneak.

Lame Jerry turned his face to the wall and groaned.

From that time he seemed to get well with a sort of fury. He rarely spoke, never smiled, and Jane could only guess at the thoughts that fixed on his rugged features the expression of a demon. He said little to her about having saved his life, but on leaving he flung into the baby's lap a purse of money.

What's that? cried Dick Oscar. He snatched the child up, and the purse fell to the floor. He kicked it toward Lame Jerry. We don't want none of the money you wuz bought with, said the stern husband of Janey Bleylock.

Lame Jerry did not go back to his now hateful home, but lived on the mountain as simply as a wild beast, hiding from men, indifferent to all things save the set purpose of his life. It was known to but few that he had survived the moonshiners' attempt to kill him. Jane and Dick Oscar were silent people, and news travelled slowly in that mountain country.

Lame Jerry lay in wait for Discoe, and saw him continually as he lounged about his occupations hunting, fishing, hoeing his little patch of ground, riding down the mountain to join the boys in a frolic. But he never shadowed Cordy's lover as far as his cabin door. He would not see his child until

The day came at last. Discoe was cleaning his gun in the woods, unarmed, inert, unsuspicious. Behind him, huge and misshapen, the hunchback crawled and coiled and sprung. There was little resistance the surprise was too complete and Lame Jerry's arm was nerved by hate and madness. When Discoe was dead the murderer dragged his body to Caney Fork, and weighting it with rocks, saw it sink beneath the hiding waves. Then he went to his daughter.

Cordy!

At the sound of his voice, and at sight of him, the girl fell, screaming. She fully believed her father dead, and being slow of wit, now conceived that his ghost stood in her doorway.

Don't you know your father, Cordy?

You are his spirit.

No, I am flesh, my girl. Come to me.

You were killed by Welch's boys.

I wuz hurt, but I got well.

Still, incredulity and fear were in the girl's big wandering blue eyes. If you ain't a ghost, said she, timidly, taste my soup on the fire.

No, my girl. I won't taste Discoe's soup. But look here.

He threw himself on the high, soft feather−bed, and rising, pointed to the impress of his form. She came forward, her hands outstretched, like one who is blind. He seized them, and gazed into her face. Yes, it was the same white, fragile Cordy, not altered by a line or a trace of thought. The same wide, simple blue eyes; the same weak, red baby mouth; the light hair falling in a smooth plait; the skin clear and colorless. But was his gaze distracted that he fancied a change in the slim girl's figure?

Cordy! Cordy! He clasped her in his arms, and she wept. But before he kissed her he wiped her face fiercely, as though rubbing off a stain. And so, my girl, he said, gently, after they had talked a long while, you didn't think you wuz doin' anything wrong to take up with Discoe and no preacher to make it honest?

She twisted her fingers nervously. I didn't know what to do. They said you wuz dead. An' Discoe said he'd like to have me. An' he's a nice, well−made man. An' I wuz so dull with fright an' grief that I didn't much care. But I care now. An' he's goin' to marry me, pappy, when when the baby comes.

He's a black−hearted devil.

No, pappy, no. You don't know him 's I do. He's been powerful good to me.

Lame Jerry sat long in Discoe's cabin, affecting not to see Cordy's restless glances down the mountain path.

I'll go now, he said, 'nless you like t' have me stop with you to−night, Cordy.

Better not, pappy. Discoe mightn't like it. But I'll tell him about you when he comes home, an' to−morrer you come t' see him.

Her father came with the morrow, to find Cordy but slightly annoyed at Discoe's non−appearance. I reckon he's off somewhere with the boys, she said; I ain't no call to fret.

Days passed; weeks dragged along. Lame Jerry spent all his time now in Discoe's cabin, but Cordy rarely spoke to him. All her soul was absorbed in watching and waiting. Her hearing grew to be so finely attuned that she heard all strange sounds of nature that hide from dull ears; but never the sound for which she waited.

Cordy, said her father one day, it's lonely here.

Not for me, pappy. I have to keep things ready for Discoe.

He won't come, girl.

Cordy smiled that dim, vacant smile that Jerry was learning to dread.

Come with me, honey; let us go away.

I must wait here, pappy.

You don't feel as if you could give him up, my girl, for me as loves you so much, much more?

And Cordy answered, very simply, How can I give him up, pappy? he's my man, you know.

Again he said to her, You didn't know I had money, Cordy, in the bank at Nashville?

No, pappy.

I've always kept you different from others, said the old man. I meant to leave the mountains with you when there wuz money enough for us to be free. But I had to hurry. You remember the day you wuz fifteen?

Yes, pappy, she said, vacantly.

You had been strange an' ailin' a long time, and that day you fell down in a fit. I knowed then I must hurry an' git you to the city, whar a doctor could cure you. That wasn't more'n a year ago. You're only a child now, Cordy.

Yes, pappy.

It wuz slow work makin' money, so I engaged as a spy to Peters; he paid well, or Government paid through him. It wuz for you, Cordy for you.

'Twuzn't right, pappy. Discoe didn't think it wuz right.

Honey, have you had any of them fits since you came here to live with Discoe?

One, pappy. Sometimes I think that's why he left me.

Then you ought to hate him. Give up the thoughts of him, child, an' come with me to Nashville. It'll be pleasant. We'll have a pretty little house, not a rough log−cabin. An' I'll hire a woman to do all the work. You sha'n't soil your little hands, my girl; and I'll buy you ribbons and such gowns as city girls wear blue and pink. An' I'll get a buggy an' take you drivin' every day like a lady. Won't you come, my girl?

No, pappy; I have to stay here. My man will be back soon, an' he'll want Cordy.

And to every attack or entreaty Cordy returned the same unmoved answer. Once he threatened her. But at his tone of force and rough authority she fell in the dreadful convulsions that maddened him and shook her reason. After that he was always gentle with her.

One day a travelling preacher stopped at the cabin and asked to stay all night. When Cordy learned who he was an unwonted excitement took possession of her.

She called her father apart.

Discoe said he'd marry me the first time a preacher come this way, she whispered, her light eyes shining. P'r'aps he has sent this one.

No, no, my girl; don't think it.

But I will think it, she said, shrilly, and springing toward the stranger. Mister, did my man send you? and will he come after you soon?

The stranger stared.

Don't mind her, said Lame Jerry, roughly. Her man left her, and she ain't been right in her wits since.

Looking from one to the other, Cordy burst into a low laugh.

I see; Discoe wants to surprise me. But never mind; I'll be ready.

As the sun went down she dressed herself in a white dress, and braided her smooth, thick hair. Then, with a smile, she sat watching by the window. Ah! it was a sight for God to pity! The young, unrested head, the eagerness of the sharpened face, and, defined against the rough walls, the most pathetic shape of one soon to become a mother, with Shame and Despair for her furious handmaidens.

After this her father hoped no more. A little later, in a driving storm, he plunged down the mountain to find Jane Oscar and bring her to his child. At the wild midnight hour a babe was laid on Cordy's piteous young breast both breathed faintly until the rising of the sun, when their souls went out together. And Lame Jerry was left to live with his money and his memories.

JACK AND THE MOUNTAIN PINK.

YOUNG SELDEN was bored. Who was not bored among the men? It was the tense summer of '78. A forlorn band of refugees from the plague crowded a Nashville hotel. There was nothing for the men to do but to read the fever bulletins, play billiards in an insensate sort of way, and keep out of the way of the women crying over the papers.

Young Selden felt that another month of this sort of thing, would leave him melancholy mad. So he jammed some things into a light bag and started off for a tramp over Cumberland Mountain.

I envy you, said a decrepit old gentleman, with whom he was shaking hands in good−bye. I was brought up in the mountain country fifty years ago. Gay young buck I was! Go in, my boy, and make love to a mountain pink! Ah, those jolly, barefooted, melting girls! No corsets, no back hair, no bangs, by Heaven!

It was the afternoon of a hot September day. Young Selden had started that morning from Bloomington Springs in the direction of the Window Cliff a ridge of rocks from which he had been told a very fine view could be obtained. The road grew rougher and wilder, seeming to lose itself in hills, stumps, and fields, and was as hard to trace out as a *Bazar* pattern. He finally struck a foot−path leading to a log−cabin, where a very brown woman sat peacefully smoking in the door−way.

Good−day, he said, taking off his hat.

The brown woman nodded in a friendly manner the little short, meaning nod of the mountains, that serves, so to speak, as the pro−word of these silent folk. Young Selden inquired the way to Window Cliff.

You carn't git thar 's the crow flies, she drawled, slowly; but I reckin my daughter k'n g'long with yer.

Aha! thought Selden a mountain pink!

Take a cheer, said the mother, rising and going within. He seated himself on the steps, and made friends with a dog or two.

A young girl soon appeared, tying on a sun−bonnet. She greeted him with a nod, the reproduction of her mother's, and drawled, in the same tone, Reckin you couldn't git tu Winder Clift 'thout somebody to show you the way.

And you will be my guide?

'F co'se.

They started off, young Selden talking airily. He soon felt, however, that he shouldn't make love to *this* mountain pink. To begin with, there was no pink about her. She was brown, like her mother.

Coffee! thought Selden, with a grim remembrance of a black, muddy liquid he had drunk a few nights before at a log−cabin, over which the very babies smacked their lips.

Her eyes had the melancholy of a cow's, without the ruminative expression that gives sufficient intellectuality to a cow's sad gaze. To put it tersely, they looked stupid. Her mouth curled down a little at each corner. Her hair was not visible under her pea−green sun−bonnet. Her dress of whitish linsey was skimpy in its cut, and she wriggled in it as if it were a loose skin she was trying to get out of.

She was not a talker. She looked at Selden with big eyes, and listened impassively. He elicited from her that her name was Sincerity Hicks; that her mother was the widder Hicks, and there were no others in the family; that she had never been to school, but could read, only she had no books.

Should you like some?

Dunno. 'Pears 's if thar's too much to do t' fool over books.

Perhaps because he had talked so much young Selden began to get out of breath. They had crossed a field, climbed a fence, and were descending a great hill, breaking a path as they walked. He panted, and could hardly keep up with Sincerity, though she seemed not to walk fast. But she got over the ground with a light−footed agility that aroused his envy. It looked easy, but, since he could not emulate her, he concluded that long practice had trained her walk to its perfection. He noticed, too, that she walked parrot−footed, placing each new track in the impression of the other. Imitating this, awkwardly enough, he got on better.

Reaching the clear level at the bottom of the hill, he saw at a glance that he had penetrated to a wild and virginal heart of beauty. Like a rough water−fall melting into a silver−flowing river, the vexatious and shaggy hill sloped to a dreaming valley. Streams ran about, quietly as thoughts, over pale rocks. Calacanthus bushes, speckled with their ugly little red blooms, filled the air with a fragrance like that of crushed strawberries. Upspringing from this low level of prettiness rose the glory of the valley the lordly, the magnificent birch− trees. Their topmost boughs brushed against the cliffs that shut in the valley on the opposite side. How fine these cliffs were! They rose up almost perpendicularly, and, freed halfway of their height from the thick growth of underbrush, stood out in bare, bold picturesqueness. Window Cliffs! Aha! these were the windows. Two wide spaces, square and clean−blown, framing always a picture now a bit of hard blue sky; other times pink flushes of sunrise, or the voluptuous moon and peeping eyes of stars.

Want ter go t' the top? inquired Sincerity.

I dunno, rejoined Selden, lazily. Truth was, he did not wish to move. He liked the vast shadows, the cool deeps, the singing tones of the valley. Then he was sure he had a blister on his heel. Still, to come so far How long a walk is it?

Oh, jest a little piece 'bout a quarter.

Up and away, then! cried young Selden.

A long quarter he found that walk. They crossed the valley, climbed a fence, and dropped into a corn−field to be hobbled over. Up and down those hideous little furrows it was as sickening as tossing on a chopping sea. Selden stopped to rest. Sincerity, not a feather the worse, looked him over with mild patience.

Lemme tote yo' haversack, she said.

No, no, said the young man, with an honest blush. But he was reminded of a flask of brandy in his knapsack, of which he took a grateful swig.

Now, said his guide, as, the corn−field crossed, they emerged into forest now we begins to climb the mountain.

Selden groaned. He had thought himself nearly on a level with the Window Cliff. To this day that climb is an excruciating memory to young Selden. He thought of

Johnny Schnapps,
Who bust his shtraps,

and wondered if the disaster was not suffered in going up a mountain. He felt himself melting away with heat. He knew that his face was blazing like a Christmas pudding, and dripping like a roast on a spit. He resigned the attempt to keep up with Sincerity. When they started on this excruciating tramp the droop of her pea−green sun−bonnet had seemed to him abject; now he knew that it expressed only contempt contempt for the weakling and the stranger.

But one gets to the top of most things by trying hard enough, and they gained at last the rough crags that commanded the valley.

Ah! the fair, grand State! There was a spot for a blind man to receive sight! The young man drew a long breath as he gazed over the bewitching expanse. All so fresh, so unbreathed−on, the only hints of human life the little log−cabins perched about, harmonious as birds' nests amid their surroundings.

Sincerity Hicks stood fanning herself with the green sun−bonnet. There was something pretty about her, now that this disfigurement was removed. But a mountain pink what a pretty implication in the name! no.

So this is Window Cliff? he said. And is there any particular name for that ledge yonder?

'Tis called Devil's Chimney, 'nd the cut between is Long Hungry Gap.

Long Hungry Gap? where have I heard that famished name? Oh yes, some of Peters's scouts. You know Peters?

Yaas, I've heerd tell o' Jim Peters.

Sincerity's drawl was not quickened, but Selden was surprised to see a light leap into her eyes as suddenly as a witch through a key−hole.

These fellows had a room next to mine at the Bloomington Hotel, Selden went on, and the walls are like paper; so I heard all they said.

And what d' they say?

Well, that the captain was up the country on a moonshine raid; but that they were on the track of something better had heard of a 'powerful big still' up in Long Hungry Gap and would mash it up as soon as the captain got back.

D' they say when Peters wuz expected?

The next day.

Sincerity tied on her bonnet.

Guess you kin find the way back, she remarked.

Hello! what does this mean?

I've got somethin' t' attend to across the mounting.

I'll go with you.

Sincerity stopped and turned a serious face. Likely 's not you'll git hurt.

Oho! I'm *in*, if there's any chance of a scrimmage. Go ahead.

She did go ahead. If the path had been vexatious before, now it was revengeful and aggressive. In fact, there was no path. But Sincerity, like love, found out a way. Suddenly, like a comic mask popped on a friend's face, something sinister and strange burst upon them through the familiar woods. Or, rather, they burst upon it a wild−cat still, securely sheltered under an innocent combination of rocks, ferns, and magnolia−trees.

Four or five wild−looking fellows sprang up, their hands on their rifles.

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None o' yo' shootin', said Sincerity Hicks; he's a friend.

Sho' he ain't a spy? 'Cause if that's the case, mister, you'll stay in these woods face down.

My impetuous moonshiner, I don't call myself the friend of you law−breakers? but I'm no spy. I brought the news to the faithful Sincerity of Captain Peters being on your track.

Hurried questions were asked and answered. Several resolute voices suggested to fight it out, but all seemed to await the decision of an old man they called Jack, who leaned against a tub, with a touching expression of meekness under unmerited ill−luck.

No, boys, he said; we ain't strong enough. But we'll run off what we can. Save the copper we'll never git another so big an' satisfactory an' the mash tun, an' as many of the tubs 's you can git off.

It was a transformation scene. Things seemed to fly to pieces all at once, like a bomb−shell. The great copper still was hoisted on the shoulders of two or three men; the worm, the mash tun, the coolers, were taken down with celerity, and the unlucky moonshiners made off through the woods.

Reckin th' rest 'll have ter go, said Jack, pensively; but tell you what, Sincerity Hicks, seems 's if I couldn't b'ar to have 'em git th' old sow an' her pigs.

Run 'em off.

They're too young, honey. Come 'ere.

He led to a mimosa−tree behind a rock; and under its sensitive shade reposed, like Father Nile, a portly porcine mother, overrun with little, pink, blind pigs.

Ain't you got a spar' tub? asked the girl.

His face lighted. I catches, he said, gently.

He brought an empty whiskey puncheon, and covered the bottom with straw. Then he lifted the pink pigs into it, assisted by Sincerity and the elegant Selden.

The mother squealed. Stuff her mouth, ordered the old man.

Sincerity thrust an ear of corn into the open jaws.

Now, said Jack, I'll run briefly through the woods, a−toting this, an' the old sow she'll follow

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No, you don't, Jack Boddy! said a quiet voice. Smell o' that.

The ugly end of a rifle protruded itself. A Tennessee giant leaned against the rock. Peters? Of course it was Peters. What other man had that easy swagger, three feet of black beard, and as wide a grin in saying checkmate?

Jack Boddy smiled innocently.

Why, captain, you see me jest attendin' to a litter o' pigs o' mine.

Yes, I see. An' my men is attendin to some pigs o yourn. Walk out, old 'coon.

Peters's scouts were destroying all that was left of the mountain still.

Whar's the others? asked one of the men.

I run this here still all by myself, said Jack, with an air of ingenuous pride.

What a lie! said the captain. Have you cut his copper boiler, boys?

'Tain't here.

Whar's your copper, Jack?

Gone to heaven, said Jack, rolling his eyes.

You can't make anything out o' Jack Boddy, said a scout, grinning.

Well, I've got you, anyhow, cried the captain.

An' the oldest one in the business, Jim.

An' I'll ketch the rest in time. Come on, boys. We'll stop at the widder Hicks's to−night. Can your mother put us up, Sissy?

Dunno, said Sincerity.

Mighty know−nothin' all of a sudden. And turning to Selden: You're a stranger, I see, mister. On the cirkit?

Not at all; only a traveller. Climbed the Window Cliff, and stumbled over here.

'F you'd been in these parts a year or so ago, said an old man, relieving his mouth of the white whiskers he was chewing you'd 'a seen a sight o' stills. They were thick as weevils in flour. But a man of might arose in the land, and he cleared 'em out.

Peters, I suppose?

Yessir James Cook Peters, whose name ought to be Gideon, the Sword of the Lord; formerly an ignorant blacksmith of Tipper County, but advanced, by the grace of God an' the app'intment of gov'ment, to bust wild−cat stills, an' flood the earth with hot whiskey a−steamin' from the vats.

Any er murderin' involved in the blacksmithin' trade? inquired Jack Boddy, with a casual air of interest.

Captain Peters turned an angry red, but said nothing.

Becaze, continued the artless old man, it's a pretty bloody business you've took up now. How many men have you killed? Five, I b'lieve, with your own hand, an' twenty−one with yer men.

It wuz a fair fight, said the captain. I killed 'em honorable, an' wuz acquitted by the laws o' my country.

And though their numbers should be seventy times seven, said the white−haired satellite of the captain, and the land run with blood, this thing has got to be put a stop to.

Look a−here, James Riggs, said Jack, this here moonshinin' is jest a wriggle−worm. Don't you know howsoever many pieces you chop 'em into, a fresh head 'll grow, an' a new worm swim away? Tell you, you cant stop moonshinin' 's long's there's an honest man in Old Hickory's State.

The Lord commanded, and the sun stood still, said James Riggs; 'twon't be no harder job 'n that.

As they talked they were descending the mountain. The noble Jack, alas! was handcuffed and guarded between two men. From time to time he scratched his head against the end of a rifle that was nearer his ear than some men

would have liked. Evidently, though open to reproach, Mr. Boddy was a knight without fear.

The widow Hicks manifested no surprise at the coming of her guests. They found her with her hands plunged into a great tray of meal and water enough to make hoe−cake for a regiment.

Hurry up with supper, old woman, said Captain Peters. I'm dead tired. I rid all last night, an' ain't slept for three nights runnin'.

At supper he could hardly keep his eyes open.

I'll turn in right off, he said.

There were some preliminaries to be gone through with not of prayers or undressing, however. The captain eyed his prisoner thoughtfully, and remarked, B'lieve they call you Slippery Jack?

'I am kind of hard to hold, said Mr. Boddy, with a modest twinkle.

So!

Another moment, and Jack was tightly bound by a stout rope around the captain's own body. I reckon you don't git away to−night.

Dunno! said Jack.

The cabin had two rooms. In one the widow, Sincerity, and Mr. James Riggs went to bed. Mr. Boddy and the captain occupied the one bed in the other. A third of it was offered young Selden, but he preferred a blanket and the floor. The scouts were divided, and guarded doors and windows.

Young Selden could not sleep. The wild novelty of the situation excited him, and his aching limbs made him toss uneasily. A little fire smouldered on the hearth, and big, shapeless shadows clutched at each other in the corners. Plenty of sounds broke the silence. The captain, happy in having made a Siamese twin of Slippery Jack, snored as if he were choking to death. The guards talked and jested roughly. A whippoor−will's three wild notes sounded just above the roof. He wondered if Jack was asleep. No; there was a slight alert movement of his body, and young Selden caught the gleam of a wild blue eye under a shaggy eyebrow. With perceptions sharpened, intensified, Selden waited for he knew not what. Mr. Boddy's eye rolled upward and what! a wilder, brighter eye, a star, shone with answering ray through a crevice in the roof. The crevice widened; other stars stole in sight. Selden felt as if his senses were leaving him. Now the crevice was obscured; and now something shining, glimmering, and cold as the light of eye or star, protruded itself cautiously as peeping mouse through the hole in the roof. It was the point of an open knife.

Selden almost sprang to his feet. Was he to witness murder? But somehow he trusted Jack Boddy and he waited.

The knife was affixed to a knotted rope. It soon dangled within reach of Mr. Boddy's hand. And the sly moonshiner, with a silent grin at the sleeping captain, cut the ropes that bound them together. Then hand over hand, lightly as a sailor, he climbed the rope, slipped through the opening, and was gone,

Over the hills, and far away.

Young Selden wanted to shout. But he contented himself with a quiet chuckle, and went to sleep.

He was awakened in the morning by blue−blaze swearing. The captain was foaming at the mouth, James Riggs was wiping his eyes with a spotted handkerchief, and the scouts were swearing by all that was blessed or damned that they had not closed their eyes.

How is it with you, stranger? said Captain Peters. Did you see or hear anything?

Oh no. I slept straight through, said young Selden, with that cheerful readiness to lie that comes to great souls.

Well, the devil must 'a helped him.

Lor, boys, said the widow Hicks, with a slight twitch at the corners of her mouth, you know Jack Boddy is a powerful cunnin' man slippery as an eel.

Jest let me get these hands on him once more jes' *once* more!

S'pose you'd kill him, wouldn't you? said the widow, sweetly. Lor, now, I s'pose you don't make no more of killin' a man 'n I do of wringin' a chicken's neck?

Don't excite him, implored James Riggs; he's powerful plagued over this misfortune.

Come to breakfast, said the widow. I won't make no laughin'−stawk of him 'f I can help it.

Damnation! said the captain.

As for Sincerity Hicks, she looked as stolid as a wooden Indian. Selden pressed some money in her hand at parting, and whispered, My dear girl, I was delighted; you climb like a cat.

Guess this 'll be good for some blue beads, she said, without moving a muscle; I've been a−wantin' some a right smart while.

Young Selden shook with silent laughter as he strode away.

A mountain pink! he murmured. Oh no, a bean stalk a Cumberland bean stalk.

THE END.