



"GOOD-DAY," HE SAID, TAKING OFF HIS HAT.

"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-cut 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.

"None o' yo' shootin'," said Sincerity Hicks; "he's a friend."

"Sho' be ain't a spy? 'Cause if that's the case, mister, you'll stay in these woods. 'Foe 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 get another so big an' satisfactory—an' the mash tun, an' as many of the tubs 's you can get off."

It was like 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—"

"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' yours. Walk out, ad 'eoun."

Peters' scouts were destroying the left of the mountain still.

"What'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."

"What'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 sirket?"

"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' sills. 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 appointment of gov'ment, to bust wild-cat stills, an' flood the earth with hot whiskey a-steamun' from the vats."

"Any—or—murderin' involved in the black-smithin' trade?" inquired Jack Boddy, with a casual air of interest.

Captain Peters turned an angry red, but said nothing.

"'Cause," 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 was a fair fight," said the Captain. "I killed 'em honorable, an' was 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 like 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 can't stop moonshinin' 's long's there's an honest man in Old Hickory's State."



"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 widder Hicks, with a slight twitch at the corners of her mouth, "you know Jack Boddy is a powerful cummin' man—slippery as an eel."

"Jest let me get these hands once more—jes' sure more!"

"S'pose you'd kill him, wouldn't you?" said the widder, 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 widder. "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,"

"NONE O' YO' SHOOTIN'," SAID SINCERITY."

"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 widder 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 tight 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 widder, 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 snouldered 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 whip-poor-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.



"NO, YOU DON'T, JACK BODDY."



A "MOUNTAIN PINK."

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."