

"Now, puss, don't you be a bringin' your kittens down till they're spry-legged an' kin look after themselves," admonished Jeremiah, "else Susan'll be holdin' out about drownin'—an' her 'tarnal condemnation," he added. The cat blinked knowingly. She had brought up more than one family in secrecy with the aid of this friend.

Jeremiah was happy in the barn, but when he approached the house he laid his happiness away like an appropriate garment. There was but one thing there that he loved, a poor print of the Madonna and Child he had found in some stray magazine. It was pinned on the wall at the foot of his bed. Susan did not recognize it as an emblem of Rome and she allowed it to remain there. It was not beautiful to her—the margin was fly-specked. The young life on the farm kindled no flame of yearning in her breast. Through some perversity of nature, the warm motherly heart which should have been her dower had fallen to the brother's share.

They said little to one another through the day. After the early supper Jeremiah brought the double team to the door. Susan believed in combining prudence with piety. The back seat of the waggon was taken up by a long shallow basket, in which were many fresh-smelling butter-pats. They were stamped with a conventional pattern, (Susan would have abhorred a "strawberry print.") Jeremiah was to distribute these while Susan went to meeting.

"Can I trust you not to go to the tavern," she said, as she alighted on the schoolhouse steps.

Jeremiah flicked an imaginary fly off the horse's back. "Why, Susan, certingly, I'm real anxious to come to-night, I'd just as live stay now."

Nevertheless he chirruped to the horse and was soon around the corner. Susan was much gratified. He had never expressed desire to attend before. She spoke of this hopeful sign to the new preacher. He made it the theme of the evening in his prayer for the prodigal. Everyone knew to whom he referred. The young preacher was disheartened. It was a stiff, rheumatic gathering. His efforts to arouse them produced only a galvanic action. There were a few young people there. They had come curiously wondering what a revival would be like. There had been no revival in the village for a score of years.

Meanwhile Jeremiah drove his waggon from door to door. Then with out hesitating, he drove out the road to the tavern. He drank only a mug of hot cider, but it warmed and quickened his slow blood. At last he turned to the meeting. He would quietly take the seat by the door and wait until it was over. He set his lips together tightly. Once he had laughed out in meeting at some inappropriate remark, and he was in mortal dread of repeating the error.

As he entered the little schoolhouse, the preacher started the well-known hymn "O prodigal child, come home, O come home."

Again, as in the morning, Jeremiah shrank back in his clothes. He noticed many curious eyes fixed on him. The five-minute prayers were full of petitions for the prodigal, but the old man did not wince. At last Susan rose and requested the prayers of the meeting for Jeremiah Boggs, who was woefully afflicted of the devil, and was under eternal condemnation.

Jeremiah's gray eyes flashed as he rose to his feet. He seemed to fill out his clothes again. He threw back his head determinedly.

"Preacher an' friends," he quavered, "I aint never spoke in meetin' afore, but I must say somethin' now afore you waste your prayers on a wicked old sinner like me. I don't deny that I'm a swearin' an' a lyin' an' a drinkin' old sinner, an' I don't deny that I haint no confidence in your 'tarnal condemnation—but I hev my reasons, friends, I hev my reasons. I aint made like the rest of you, friends. I aint got any sort o' hankerin' fur your 'tarnal condemnation, an' I believe ud give me delirium tremens a sight quicker'n spendin' my evenings in yonder tavern. An' I have my objections to you, friends, the hull lot of you."

Jeremiah leaned forward impressively. He brilled with the courage of his convictions.

"There aint no love among you for horses an' cows, an' hens, an' all the poor dumb critters, let alone the speakin' ones. You don't seem to sense what you was given kindly feelin's for an' the man that'll work his horses fur six days in the week, and then harness up to bring the hull family to meetin' on Sunday, aint er going to pray for me. No more is the man who can leave his cows a lowing and a suffering to be milked, while he gads about ter babbisms and fellership meetings. Your Providence won't milk the cows and the beasts will suffer. No, I aint a going to have that man a praying fur me. And as fur the woman who can say to her boy—choose the partiest of that batch of kittens and drown the rest, (so teaching him to be a murderer) why, I aint er going to have her a praying fur me nuther. It's a most equal to eternal condemnation just to think on. No, I'm a wicked old sinner, but I'd rather be what I am than one of the deacons that kicked the dog out er church last Sacrament Sunday. If there was anything pitiful and loving about your religion I could believe it, but when I see this Heavenly love you talk of, a drying up every natural feeling, it makes me think that the stiddy love the poor beasts give us is more nourishing."

There was a long pause. Jeremiah's words had touched many hearts. There were tears even in Susan's hard, gray eyes.

Then the preacher rose. "Friends," he said gently, "we have much to think of to-night. God willing, there is going to be a revival here, and brother Jeremiah will be our leader to guide us into the paths of kindly earthly love we have strayed from." Then he prayed, dwelling chiefly on the mercy and love of Christ towards his people.

Jeremiah listened attentively. This was new gospel to him. The closing hymn was "The Ninety and Nine." There were many smothered sobs as the voices rang out the old story of the lost sheep on the mountain. Jeremiah remained standing when the others were seated. His old face was touched with an unspeakable glory.

"O Lord," he said simply, "if Thou'll care fur me as tenderly as I'd care fur a poor lost sheep, I will come ter Thee. I never heard, Lord, that Thou cared fur the dumb critters or I'd a come before."

There was joy in that little earthly congregation over the one sinner that repented, and who will doubt that there was joy also among the angels.

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