

ABNER DANIEL

By... WILL N. HARBEN Author of "Wheatfeld"

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The old man dropped the towel and thrust his long, jointless fingers into his vest pocket for a horn comb which folded up like a jackknife.



"It's no laughing matter, Uncle Ab."

Think he's off his cap on the land question, now that he's traded his best nest egg for another swipe of the cash register.

"Hold on to it," grinned Abner; "that is, if he's not a rake and scrape enough to get together to pay the taxes.

"If I do," the man accused, thundered from the hill as he strode out. "It'll be my money that's lost—money that I made by hard work."

The old man's face, glared over his eyeglasses at his wife. "I've had enough of your tongue, my lady. If I don't just now, I'll shut you up sooner."

then, the long an' short of it is that I happen to be on the inside an' know that a railroad is goin' to be run from Blue Lick Junction to Darley.

"That's what I said," Mrs. Bishop's eyes flashed with sudden hope, and then, as if remembering her husband's limitations, her face fell.

"How do I? That's it now—how do I?" and the old man laughed freely. "I've had my fun out of this thing, listenin' to what every crank said about me bein' cracked an' so on, but I was just a-lyin' low waitin' fer my time."

"Well, I'll be switched!" ejaculated Abner Daniel, half seriously, half sarcastically. "Geewhilkins! A railroad!

"I got it from headquarters." The old man raised himself on his toes and knocked his heels together, a habit he had not indulged in for many a year.

"Well, that's the man I mean," said Bishop, more earnestly. "Somehow the others were all looking at Abner Daniel, who grunted suddenly and almost angrily.

"I wouldn't trust that skunk no further 'n I could find a bull by the tail." "You say you wouldn't?" Bishop tried to smile, but the effort was a facial failure.

"I wouldn't trust 'im nuther, Brother Ab," chimed in Mrs. Bishop. "As soon as I laid eyes on 'im I knowed he wouldn't do. He's too mealy mouthed an' fawny."

"That's the man I mean," said Bishop, more earnestly. "Somehow the others were all looking at Abner Daniel, who grunted suddenly and almost angrily.

"I was jest a-wonderin'," replied her brother. "You are?" said Bishop angrily. "It seems to me you don't do much else."

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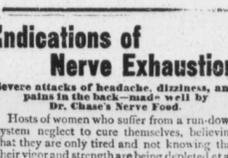
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Mrs. Harrison who restored her system by using Dr. Chase's Nerve Food.

CHAPTER III. THE next morning at breakfast Alfred Bishop announced his intention of going to Atlanta to talk to Perkins and incidentally to call on his brother William, who was a successful wholesale merchant in that city.

"I believe I would," said Mrs. Bishop. "Maybe William will tell you what to do."

"I'd see Perkins first," advised Abner Daniel. "If I felt sure Perkins had bunked me, I'd steer clear of William. I'd hate to hear 'im lie out on that subject. He's made his pile by keepin' a sharp lookout."

"I hadn't had no reason to think I have been lied to," said Bishop doggedly as he poured his coffee into the saucer and shook it about to cool.

"Poor father," said Alan to his uncle as he sat in the dining room.

"I ain't no triffin' matter," admitted Daniel. "That's no tellin' how many thousand acres he may have bought. He's keepin' somethin' to himself. I reckon he's got the best in his year."

That afternoon Bishop was driven to Darley by a negro boy who was to bring the buggy back home.

It was the hour at which Perkins usually left for home, but the old planter found him in.

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