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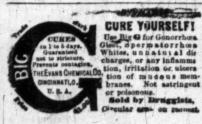
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OF MEN AND WOMEN

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Minard's Liniment in th

..... AN HUMBLE

that I'm so no 'count an played out as

"Wby, Lord, Pap, of course not!" Jason replied. "I didn't say nothin like

that, did I?" "Nor you better not say nothin like it if you don't want me to show you in a way you won't forgit that I ain't nigh played out. Mebby you don't b'lieve it, Jason Roberts, but if you feel like tryin it I'll guarantee to whup you in two shakes of a sheep's tail till you won't

know who you are." "Oh, that's all right, Pap. I ain't wantin to fight you."

"Co'se you ain't, Jason, 'cause you ain't no fool, an you know it ain't safe to fool with me. Humph! Set down in the shade an rest! My land, Jason Roberts, I've cut more wheat in my time an never grunted at it than you'll ever cut if you live to be a thousan' years old. Set down in the shade an rest Lord! Sich talk makes me mad."

Pap didn't sit down either. Though they denied him the privilege of wielding a cradle, he found an opportunity to busy himself by putting the whea



"Howdy, boys? Howdy, Pap?"

bundles into shocks. This was light work compared with the other, and, seeing that Pap was determined to do something, Jason encouraged him in it. "Lord!" he said, with a wink at the others. "Pap's jest fell right in whar he plumb belongs. Anybody knows enough to swing a cradle or bind up the system in a manner the patient wheat, but thar's pow'ful blamed few cannot account for. On examination who know how to set up a wheat shock so's it won't spile if it rains. Guess Pap's 'bout the only man here that can do it."

This pleased Pap and fully reconciled him to his work, and he said nothing more about wanting to swing a cradle.

In the afternoon he began to go to the shade pretty often, and each time he went he tarried longer than he had the time before. Finally Sam Morgan noticed this and inconsiderately remarked:

"Guess you're gittin putty tired, ain't

"Tired! Me tired!" Pap exclaimed. "You hearn me say any word 'bout bein tired, Sam Morgan?" "No, but I notice you goin to the

shade a right smart more than you done this mornin." "What if you do? 'Tain't 'cause I'm

tired, but jest 'cause it's so mis'able The men had all come out to the shade to rest, and presently Sim Banks came down across the field and toined them. He had been working in his own field just on the other side of a

fence. He saluted them with: "Howdy, boys? Howdy, Pap?" "Howdy, Sim?" they said in return. "How you gittin 'long?" he asked.

"Oh, all right, I guess," Jason re-"We'll git through before night if nothin happens." "I'm sorry you all had to cut this wheat." Sim said after a pause, "when

I'd done agreed with Mis'us Mann that I'd do it. I didn't feel that I ort to keep my promise, though, after all them things she's been a-sayin of late." "You done jest right, Sim," Pap Sampson announced unhesitatingly, "an nobody can't blame you a bit. When Mary Mann interfered like she did to make trouble betwixt you an

Loueesy, you wa'n't under no obligations to do nothin for her no more, not a hand's turn." "'Tain't that, Pap, that held me back from doin as I'd agreed. 'Tain't that I hate Mary Mann too bad to lift a finger for her. It's 'cause of what people are a-sayin, an 'cause it'd give 'em room to say more, an-an 'cause l

don't want to do nothin to hurt Lou-Sim paused for a moment, but no one spoke, and presently he went on more

The Whole Story

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"I don't like to nave usin teeim ag'in nobody," he said, "an specially not ag'in a woman, but Mis'us Mann didn't have no call to go an do the way she done, for she told a plumb p'int blank lie when she narrated it around that I come to her house that night an made love to her. Lord, I never thought oncet of doin no sich a thing, no more than I thought of stickin my head in the fire. It was her that done it, an God knows I tried ever which a-way to keep her from it. I told Loueesy jest how it were, but she won't b'lieve it, though I told her I'd sw'ar to it on a stack of Bibles as high as they could be piled. I hate Mary Mann wuss'n I hate the pizenest snake that crawls, for she's a plumb liar, an she

mows it." Sim paused again, and this time Pas

Sampson spoke. "Sim," he said reassuringly, "don't one of us b'lieve nothin ag'in you that Mary Mann has told, nary a word. Nor, for my part, I hain't a-gwine ts believe it, not if she was to sw'ar to it till she was plumb black in the face." "No, but Loueesy b'lleves it," Sire

replied sadly, "an I'd ruther anybody else'd b'lieve it than her. My land, looks like she ort to know it ain't so an that I wouldn't think of doin no sich a way. Why, Pap, if I was to git to goin round a-makin love to women whar I dfdn't have no right I'd 'low for somebody to put a bullet hole through me the very fust thing I knowed. I can tell you right now, an I mean jest what I say, if ever any man made love to my wife, an I knowed it, the minute I laid eyes on that man I'd shoot him through the heart jest like I would a

dog. I would shore." A painful silence followed these words, for no one offered to speak. The men exchanged a significant glance among themselves, then looked at Sim in serious thoughtfulness. To them his threat signified more, much more, than he suspected. It impressed itself so indelibly on their minds that | Melvin had betrayed. they never forgot it, and on an after occasion they recalled it with a sickening dread that made them shudder.

> CHAPTER XIII. ONE MELVIN FEARED.

Turner knew that Melvin was not going to Beckett's Mill. He was as well assured of that fact as he would have been had Melvin told him so. He knew, on the contrary, that he was going to Hi Jenkins' place. Why he was going he did not know further than that he knew the new stranger had something to do with it.

The important information possessed by a little coterie at Beckett's Mill concerning Melvin had not reached Jonathan Turner. In fact, and for a ander it had not spread beyond the

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few persons'to whom Sam Morgan bad related it that night at Hicks' sto

The reason it had not spread, and the only reason doubtless, was attributable to Hicks. With an eye single to business he had seen a likely chance to turn a few honest dollars only if they would all keep quiet and patiently await the development of events. Taking the others fully into his confidence,

he had said: "If that feller's done somethin dret ful for which he has to hide out from the law-which, of course, he has, or he wouldn't 'a' said so-why, it stan's to reason thar'll be a reward out for him, if it ain't out already. Now, mos giner'ly when a reward is offered that a-way circulars are sent out to all the postoffices round whar the feller is likely to go, givin the amount of the reward, the feller's name an description an tellin whar he's wanted an

what he's wanted for." "Jest so," Pap Sampson had agreed "I've seed them papers a-stickin up in

the postoffice here lots of times." "Now." Hicks resumed, "my plan is for us all jest to lay low an keep our mouths shet, not sayin a word of this to nary a livin soul, an wait to see if one of them circulars don't come along here putty soon 'bout Mr. Melvin. Then when the circular does come we'll jest

nab Mr. Man an rake in that reward." They all saw the wisdom of Hicks' plan and readily agreed to it, and for awhile they kept sacredly to their agreement. The temptation to talk was great, it must be admitted, but that reward was a greater temptation

So it had come about that Turner was still ignorant of everything con cerning Melvin and in forming his opinions was acting altogether on mere surmises. He had never changed from his first formed opinion that there was something back of Melvin that was not exactly right, but he had never suc ceeded in getting beyond that point.

He readily conceived the idea that there was a connecting link some where between Melvin and Waite, but what that link was he could not tell He had no idea whether the link was one of friendship or enmity, but he was inclined to the belief that it was the former. In fact, he labored under the impression that the two young mer had been associated together in the commission of a crime or were leagued together for the purpose of committing some crime at a later date. He did not place their crime or contemplated crime beyond robbery, however, but he

fixed it at robbery on a large scale. When Melvin rode away from the house that night, Turner believed he had gone to meet and confer with Waite, but he was partially mistaken Melvin had gone to Jenkins' place, and it was on account of Waite that he had gone, but if his surmises were correct Waite was one of the last men in the world he would care to meet or with whom he would seek a conference.

As Melvin had told Mrs. Banks, he had taken the life of a human being. In the heat of a quarrel he had shot down and instantly killed a young man named Marchand. He justified himself for the act on the ground that he had acted in self defense, and in a way his claim was true. Just at the time of the killing it was merely a question of who could fire first, and if Melvin had not killed he would have been killed. But, on the other hand, Melvin was responsible for the misunderstanding, for Marchand was seeking to avenge the honor of his sister, whom

While Melvin might justify his act, he knew public opinion nor the courts would justify it, so he fled from the scene to escape arrest. Having met Louisa Banks and learned to love ber while she was a girl at school, his first thought when he began his flight was to go where he could be near her. That she had married mattered little to him, except to the extent that it removed her out of his way, for he had no very high regard for marriage nor a very strongly developed sense of honor.

His plan was to induce her to elope with him if possible, and, though she had refused to marry him when she was free to do so, he had no doubt of his ability to influence her now since it had become known to him that she had learned to regret the step she had taken when she had declined him for Sim Banks. If she would elope with him, they would go to some out of the world place out west and there lose hemselves to every one who had ever

known them, as well as to the law. In all his planning Melvin did not lose sight of the fact that the man he had killed had a younger brother living and that the brother was a deter mined, desperate character who was not likely to wait for the slow process of law to right his wrongs. From the first Melvin had feared Robert Marchand more than he feared the law and day and night he had been haunt ed with a dread that that man would hunt him out and kill him. He had covered his flight well, he knew, but he was also aware of the tireless energy and set determination of young Marchand, and this, added to the anx lety a criminal always experiences kept him in a continual state of uneasiness.

His purpose in going to Jenkins' was to discover, if he could, without making his own presence known, whether the man giving his name as Waite had stopped there and whether or not it was Robert Marchand. The way he had planned to do this was very simple and at the same time comparative-

ly safe to himself. He proposed to tie his horse some where in the woods near Jenkins' house, then creep cautiously forward under the cover of the fences and shrubbery until he reached a position commanding a view of the house and its surroundings.

He was well aware that it was a universal custom among the people of Possum Ridge to sit out in their front

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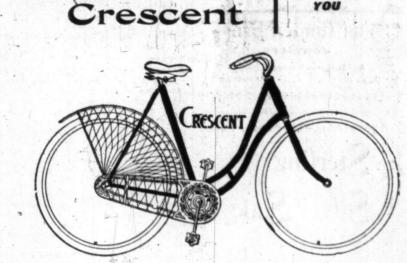
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