

"rookus." "Shoots" had spat out from the laurels, and Laird was now bringing home, along with his last drunken frolic, a bullet which was to end his profitless life.

The month was November. All day long ghostly clouds of white mist had boiled up from the valleys, had wound among the tree-stems and clung to the interlaced branches. As the dying man lay on his rope-bed and harsh creaking mattress of straw, the hickories and oaks, meeting over the cabin in the darkness where the chill night congealed moisture drop by drop on the broad shaking leaves, sent down a soft, mocking patter.

"Ossie—gal,—lean closter,—closter yit,—so's you kin make out to hear what I'm sayin'," gasped the sick man, and groaned with the effort.

"Now, Paw," urged the frightened girl gently, "hit's plumb foolish fer you to spen' words while you's hurtin'. Jes' bide thar in yo' bed, untwell Chris kin git back with the doctor. Chris is ridin' now—*hard*. He went bar'back on Esau, an' tooken the short trail by the mill. He'll git back here to we-uns fo' we know hit. Jes' you try to bide quiet-like, Paw."

"I'm passin' out now, Ossie gal," said the dying man solemnly. "When Chris an' ole Esau gits back, I'll be flitted."

Amos's wife, crouching near, thrust the end of the bright patchwork quilt in her mouth, partially