

Ruth Todd's. There were no silent tongues; every one spoke at once.

'Orphan asylum!' cried one indignantly, 'where, first they know, they'll be separated as far as the east is from the west!'

'No, no; we can't let the little fellows be taken to an orphan asylum,' another said warmly.

'I'll take them all home first,' a third exclaimed.

Then Ruth Todd spoke.

'Wait! listen to me,' she said quietly. 'See how you like my way. I reasoned it all out in the night last night. There's eight houses on Quiet Street, beside that house. There's eight poor little lone boys in that house. Eight into eight goes once.'

She waited. They understood at once.

'Shall we do it?' Ruth Todd asked simply. 'Shall we each take one lone, little boy, and keep them here on Quiet Street? Then they can grow up together. You haven't confessed it, and I haven't, but we've all of us grown to love the little things. I'll confess now that I've taken comfort all summer long, watching them through my slats. I've liked to hear 'em shout up good and happy. Shall we keep 'em here on Quiet Street? Eight into eight goes once and none to carry—away.'

There was no hesitation.

'Yes, yes!' the neighbors cried.

But hark! Lucretia was calling.

'Ruth, Ruth, tell 'em to give us little Trotty! Tell 'em my heart hankers for him, Ruth,' she called.

And so it came that the little Clearwaters grew up on Quiet Street.

The Messenger.

Rabbi Ben Josef, old and blind,
Pressed by the crowd before, behind,
Passed through the market place one day,
Seeking with weary feet his way.
The city's traffic loud, confused
His senses, to retirement used;
The voice of them that bought and sold,
With clink of silver piece and gold.

'Jehovah,' cried he, jostled sore,
Fearing to fall and rise no more,
'Thine angel send to guide my feet
And part the ways where dangers meet.'
Just then a beggar, as he passed,
A glance of pity on him cast
And, seeing so his bitter need,
Stretched forth his hand his steps to lead.

'Not so,' Ben Josef cried, 'I wait
A guide sent from Jehovah's gate.'
The beggar left, thus rudely spurned
Where gratitude he should have earned.
As day wore on the hubbub rose,
Louder and harsher to its close.
The old man, weary, sought in vain
An exit from the crowd to gain.

Jostled at every turn, his feet
Stumbled upon the ill-paved street;
Once more he cried, 'Jehovah, where
The answer to thy servant's prayer?'
No angel swift-winged, from thy throne,
Has hither for the helping flown.
Then came a whisper, clear and low,
'My messengre thou didst not know.'

'For in a beggar's humble guise
His outstretched hand thou didst despise;
Nor cared beneath his rags to find
The heart that made his action kind.

See now that thou the lesson learn,
Lest he whose face thou canst not see
Should prove a messenger from me.
—Selected.

The Chest With the Broken Lock.

(By Maude Petit, in the 'Methodist Magazine and Review'.)

A land of sand-hills and frog-ponds, scrub-oaks and mullein-stalks, garter-snakes and stumps, Pumpkin Hollow, or 'The Holler,' as its inhabitants called it, rolled on its peaceful way, eight miles from the country town and twice eight behind the times.

Such as it was, a stranger reined up his horse to look at it, one sleepy August afternoon. Behind him the road was one long, alternating series of sand-hill peaks and hollows; before him was a far-spreading area of stumpy farms, dotted here and there by small houses, built mostly of logs. To the west the smoke of a saw-mill curled slowly upward, and nearer at hand stood a dwelling-house, considerably larger than the rest, and more suggestive of the well-to-do farming population in which our country abounds. It had been painted white, but weather and storm had worn it to a dingy gray, save where it was protected by the old-fashioned verandah across the front.

The stranger gazed at it with an interest which suggested that he was perhaps not quite a stranger. He looked as if his past were linked to it in some way. Yet his appearance did not suggest any connection with 'The Holler.' Everything—his fine black suit, his eyes full of the flash and dart of thought, even to his delicately kept nails, all were out of keeping with the place. He was a fine, erect figure on his prancing black steed, a man somewhere in the early forties, and his curly hair prematurely whitened, added a refining touch to a massive forehead. His face was clean-shaven, slightly ashen, and he bore the decided stamp of a minister. There was even a touch of John Wesley in his face. Wesley, come back from the dead, could hardly have looked more compassionately on some broken-down church, than did our traveller upon that hillside home.

'Twenty-three years! Twenty-three years!' he murmured.

Then he sighed as he looked over the country.

'A poor inheritance—a miserable inheritance to divide mother and son so long—brother and brother!'

He started his horse at a slow walk westward. It was six o'clock; the mill whistle shrieked and the few workmen wended their way to their scattered homes. Two of them stood bantering each other at the cross-roads.

'It's Saturday night, Mike. You'll be fur seein' her to-morrow.

'All right, Jake; I know you'd cut me out if you could.'

The two went their separate ways, and the stranger, without appearing to follow Jake, turned, overtook him in a leisurely fashion and accommodated his horse's pace to that of the pedestrian.

'Good evening.'

'Good e'vin', answered Jake, lifting his hat to the 'gentry.'

'It's a fine evening.'

'Yes, a fine ev'nin', sir. As fine an ev'nin' as there is in this part the country.'

The stranger smiled slightly at this specimen of flat humor characteristic of 'The Holler.'

'Be ye one of them surveyors?' asked Jake.

'No, I am not surveyin'.'

'Something in the agency line, then?'

'No.'

Now, 'The Holler' boasted of never letting any one pass through without finding out who he was and what was his business. So Jake was by no means nonplussed.

'Maybe, then, you're the new preacher that's to come to "The Holler."'

'No.'

'I wuz a-goin' to say, if you wuz, it's a tough place here. They allus cuts the preacher's harness up the first night, and gen'rally about the third week he's afraid to go out after dark. It's a feller with some grit in him they wants here. Somebody with a bit of muscle to call his own.'

'I think I can satisfy you, my friend,' said the rider, smiling, and drawing his sleeve slightly to show a muscle that would have done credit to an athlete.

'Well, that's not bad,' said Jake. 'But if you been't the new preacher, maybe you're one of those chaps that goes through the country buyin' up cattle an' hogs.'

'No.'

'Or some of them tony relations o' Blake's that he's expecting from England.'

'No.'

The stranger's mouth twitched in a humorous fashion at the corners, and Jake dropped his head and muttered something beneath his breath about 'some hanged old bare-faced priest.'

Thus they moved on in silence for a few minutes.

'Can you tell me a—who lives there?' asked the stranger, pointing in a half-nervous manner to the place in which he had seemed so interested.

'Ah, now I have it. Yer a-speculatin'! Now, my dad's got nigh onto eighty acres o' as fine land as yer ever laid eyes on down the road here. But that Cardwell—'

'What—Cardwell! Did you say the name was Cardwell?'

'Yes, an' a meaner crust you won't find to deal with. Though they do give him credit for treatin' his poor ole mother well, an' so he orter, her blind, an' him—'

'Blind! Is she blind, then? What caused it? How long has she been blind?'

'Oh, it's a matter o' more'n twenty years back. Her first husband's boy and her second husband had some trouble an' he drove the boy out o' the house an' he was never heard on since. The ole lady took on kind o' hard about it afterwards an' she had a fever an' it settled in her eyes. But the land—'

'I'm not buying land. Thank you, my friend. Good evening.'

The stranger started his horse into a brisk canter, leaving Jake wondering why he had thanked him in such an earnest tone. He did not pause until he was out of sight and alone in the forest, and then he gave vent to the sobs so long restrained.

'Blind—blind! Oh, my mother—my poor, dear mother! Blind! then she never saw my letters. Perhaps she never even heard them.'

It was nearly sunset when he turned his horse's head toward the farm-house again. The cattle were coming up from their pasture for the evening milking. A boy was watering the horses at the pump. Was James Cardwell married? Was that girl with the milk-pails his daughter? Was that boy at the pump his son? The stranger rode up the lane to the back gate. 'Can I get a night's lodging here?' he asked, of a portly-looking matron in the door-yard.