

mighty bad sprain, an' can't get up off the leaves till something's done for him. Here's money to pay for it with—a twenty-dollar bill—it's the smallest I've got—be sure you don't get any bad bills in change."

"Don't—don't you want a buggy to get him into town with?" asked Lem.

"No!" exclaimed the weazel-faced man, drawing near to Lem, and whispering, "we're tracking a horse-thief, and if he's in the town he'd know us if we went in by daylight. Not a word about us to anybody. If you shouldn't find me here when you come back, hang around the house here till I come for you. These are ticklish times—we're afraid to let honest-looking farmers see us, even, for fear that they're in with horse-thieves. Now travel."

Lem started at a lively pace, but suddenly stopped and turned back.

"Is Bill Hixton the hoss-thief you're after?" said he.

"No," said the weazel-faced man, grown suspicious in an instant. "Bill Hixton's in jail in the next county. What do you know about him?"

"I know he's a horse-thief," said Lem, "but I know he saved my life once, an' that instid of buyin' you medicine I'd break your partner's legs, an' yourn too, to keep you from catchin' him if he was out."

The weazel-faced man grinned with delight. "Stick to your friends," said he, "that's the way I like to see a man do. Now hurry up, will you?"

Away went Lem, looking a year younger for every dollar of his prospective fee, while the weazel-faced man rejoined his companion.

"He's just the fellow we need," said he.

"He's as green as grass, an' looks as if he could be trusted—'tain't easy to find men you can trust in shoving counterfeits, either."

"Can't trust him after he finds out what business we're in," growled the large man.

"Now look here, Lodge, what's the use of gettin' down in the mouth that way, just when we've got a new man? S'pose he *does* only stick to us a few days; we've got the best-made money we ever had yet, and one way and another we'll manage to have him get off an average of a hundred a day. Countin' cost—sixteen and two-thirds per cent.—and makin' plenty of 'lowance for the trash that we may have to buy that we don't want and can't sell, and for what we have to pay him, we ought to clear about seventy-five dollars a day. That's better than we ever done when we was in the nigger business."

The argument seemed unanswerable, for Mr. Lodge opened his mouth only to locate a piece of tobacco.

"That ain't all, either," argued he of the weazel face, "I believe we can tie that fellow to us so he'll never leave, even if he finds out everything," and the little man repeated Lem's remark about Bill Hixton, concluding as follows:—

"Now, what I say is, let's pump him about his mother—you remember how he talked?—and give him fifty to send to her."

"Fifty queer?" asked Mr. Lodge.

"No, fifty straight," said the little man. "It's a square business transaction, that's bound to hold together, and it's no place for foolin'. There's no knowin' what tight scrapes such a fellow mightn't get us out of."

Mr. Lodge pondered moodily over the proposed business risk, but suddenly his gloomy face grew radiant, and a commotion was visible under the thicket which covered his mouth and chin, as he remarked:

"Bill Hixton would give us five hundred—half of it down—if we'd help him break out. If you've got the story straight, this chap might be put up—not so's he'd know it—to take the risk and do the work. Then we'd clear four hundred and fifty. How's that, Binkle?"

The little man danced with ecstasy; not even a blackberry cane that attached itself to his coat and yearningly reached the cuticle upon Mr. Binkle's shoulder, succeeded in subduing his ecstasy. He even gave vent to several short shrieks of delight, which were discontinued only after the more sedate Mr. Lodge had made an earnest appeal, in language almost wholly scriptural, for silence.

"We'll take the ten you was going to give him out of the fifty he's to send his mother," suggested Lodge, but the business-like Binkle replied:

"No, we won't. He'll want to spend something for himself, maybe, and he ought to spend *some* good money, in case anybody should get on the scent. I believe he's coming now—yes, it must be—*somebody's* coming, with a bottle in his hand. Thunder! I didn't make up a yarn for him to tell about what he wanted the liniment for."

"Just like you, always goin' off half cocked," growled the little man's partner, who had sunk already into his habitual despondency. "Let's get up into the timber, an' keep an eye on the fields—some infernal constable may be trackin' him."

Both men climbed trees near the edge of the woods, and scrutinized the ground between them and the town. As wheat stubble was all that the fields contained, they soon satisfied themselves that Lem was not followed. Then they descended, and when