

interfere with Jack any more, but he nursed his hatred of one who worked too hard for his liking, and lived in the hope of one day being able to gratify it.

One of the men was known as Bossy, a cognomen derived from his disposition to direct everything and everybody, on all matters, whether he knew anything about them or not. Apart from that weakness, he was not a bad sort of fellow, and he was no shirker of work.

The corn lay as it had fallen before the advance of the horse-reaper, and the task in hand was forking it into a waggon to be carried to the homestead where it was being crudely stacked to await the threshing-day. Pete was languishing at his task, and showed a tendency to fall asleep, standing. The command to "hurry up," from Jim Brown roused him to further temporary activity.

"I du believe," he said, "that this yere wurk will be the death o' me."

"We'll gi' you a r'yal funeral if yer dies," said one of the men, "with music. I can perform wonderful on a comb, wropped in a bit o' thin paper."

"People can't wurk and jaw at the same time," said Bossy; "keep a goin', Jerry."

"And you keep a goin' alser," retorted Jerry, "and don't you jaw, neither."

"Less talkin', boys," said Jim Brown.

The moon was approaching the full, and sinking behind a distant range of hills that backed up a lake of water, resembling molten silver in the flood of moonlight. Away in the other direction, about a mile distant, was an extensive forest, locally known as "The Wood," with a predominance of pines, but there was a vast number of enormous beech, oak trees, with a sprinkling of the valuable black walnut and hickory.

Half the moon had disappeared behind the distant hill when Pete, who was taking another momentary rest, growled, "A chap comin' along, on a hoss."