SARAH'S DEFIANCE.

Abraham Spencer came up the lane from the field, carrying his discolored old straw hat in his hand and mopping his face with a red cotton handkerchief. He walked stiffly and slightly bent forward from the hips, as do most hard-working men who have passed the half-century mark, but he set his heavily shod feet down with a firmness that bespoke considerable physical vigor as well as mental decision.

He scanned the house sharply as he approached, and his shaggy brows were drawn almost together in a frown. It was the middle of a sultry August afternoon, yet the doors and windows were all closed and the green holland blinds were drawn down. He tried the back door and found it fast; and though he pounded on it with his horny knuckles there was no response save a startled 'cuk, cuk, cuk!' from an old hen with a brood of downy chicks wallowing in dust beside the steps.

'Now this is migthy strange,' he muttered, perplexedly 'I wouldn't 've thought Sairy'd go away from home this way, all of a sudden. She didn't say a word about it at noontime. She's never done such a thing before, as I know of.'

He stood still for a little while meditatively rubbing his thumbs and forefingers together, while he pondered the unprecented situation.

'Couldn't be asleep, I reckon,' he conjectured. 'Never knowed her to sleep in daytime.'

Nevertheless he came down the steps and went around the house to a chamber window, where he parted a tangle of hop-vines and rapped smartly on the sash.

'Sairy!' he called, 'Sairy! are you to home?'

There was a slight sound from within as of a creaking board beneath a careful footstep, then the shade was lifted at one side and a thin, startled, elderly face looked out.

'What on earth's the matter, Sairy? What's the house all shut up like a jail for?' demanded Abraham Spencer, in a high-pitched, irascible tone. 'Don't you know the Rhynearsons've been here and gone away again?' he went on. 'I saw 'em from the north meader, and I've come clear home to see what's the matter. Was you asleep? Didn't you hear 'em knock?'

Mrs. Spencer rolled up the shade and lifted the sash with hands that trembled.

'Come now, speak up quick,' added her husband, impatiently, 'for I'm goin' after 'em and bring 'em back, and I want to know what to tell 'em.'

'No, no, Abra'm, don't go after 'em' Mrs Spencer dropped on her knees and leaned her arms wearily on the window sill. She spoke pleadingly, and there were tears in her voice as well as in her eyes. 'Oh, Abra'm, I kep' 'em out a-purpose.'

'You—what?' Abraham Spencer's tone implied that he was forced to doubt the evidence of the ears that had served him well for nearly three score years.

'I kep' 'em out a-purpose. I knowed you'd be mad, but I couldn't help it. I'm just too mortal tired and miser'ble to care what becomes of me. I ain't able to get supper for you and the hands, let alone all that Rhynearson gang. I've worked so hard today, and I didn't sleep much last night for my rheumat'z I'm gettin' old fast, and breakin' down, Abra'm. I can't hold out much longer if I don't slack up a little on hard work.'

'Well, why in thunder don't you slack up, then? What's to hinder you from goin' to bed after breakfast and stayin' there till dinner time?'

'Now, Abra'm, that' what you always say, and it's so unreasonable. Who'd do the work if I went to bed? Who'd feed the chickens and pigs, and milk the cows, and churn the butter, and clean the vegetables, and bake the bread and pies, and keep the whole house in order. You'd come out slim if I went to bed, Abra'm'

'Well, slim or no slim, I want you to either go to bed or else shut up your complainin'."

'Now, Abra'm, if you only would be a little reasonable. All I ask is that you let me slack up a little bit in ways that I can. There ain't no sense in us havin' so much comp'ny, now, since the girls are married and gone. Comp'ny, makes so much hard work' 'specially town comp'ny. Them high-flyin' town folks don't care a snap for us, Abra'm. They just like to be cooked for and waited on, and kep' over night and over Sun'dy, and fed on the best of everything, from spring chicken to watermelons. Now, them Rhynearsons—'

'Them Rhynearsons 're my friends,' sternly interposed Abraham Spencer; 'and solong's I have a roof ov.r my head my friends 're welcome under it. I wouldn't've b'lieved such a thing of you, Sairy. I haint any doubt you're tired. I'm tired myself most of the time; but I don't make that an excuse for slightin' my friends.'

'But you don't have to cook for 'em and wait on 'em, Abra'm, when you're so tired and worn out that you can't hardly drag one foot after the other, and——'

'Don't begin that old tune all over again. I've heard it many a time already. You're gettin' so you're always complainin', and if there's anything I hate it's a naggin' woman. Now, understand, I'm goin' after the Rhynearsons; I'm goin' to make 'em come back if I can. Am I to say you was away from home, or asleep or what? It won't do for me to tell 'em one thing and you another, so jest tell me what to say, and be quick about it.'

'Tell 'em anything you like, Abra'm, I don't care what. All I ask of you, if you're bound to go after 'em, is that you stop at Selwood's and get Sophrony to come over and do the work while they're here.'

'What, hire her?'

'Why, of course. You wouldn't ask a poor girl like Sophrony to work for you for nothin', I reckon.'

'My land, Sairy, how often 've I got to tell you I can't afford to pay out money for help in the house? If you once begin it you'll be always wantin' help, and there's no sense in it. Why, there was my mother——'

Mrs. Spencer staggered to her feet. She was a tall, stoop shouldered, weak-chested woman, her scant hair was iron grey, her hands were hardened and swelled at the joints with years of toil, and her face was deep-lined and shallow. Just now it was as near white as it could be, and a sudden hunted, desperate look had come into it, a look that stopped the words on her husband's lips. He broke off abruptly and looked at her in stern surprise and displeasure.

'I never knowed you to act up so cranky, Sairy. I can't see what's gettin' into you. Now, I've got no time to fool away. I'll tell Mis' Rhynearson you was asleep and didn't hear 'em knock, shall I?'

"Tell her anything you like," was the reply, in a strange, still voice that suited the look in her face. "I won't contradict you.'

"But how do you know you won't? We ought to have a clear understandin'. What you goin' to tell Mis' Rhynearson when she asks you where you was?'

"She won't ask me.'

'Well, now, I'd like to know how you know she won't?'

'Because I'm not going to give her a chance.' The window sash slid down to the sill, and the shade dropped back to its place. Abraham Spencer let go the hop vines and watched them cluster together again, with a slightly dazed look in his deep, set gray eyes.

'Now, what in blazes could she've meant by that last?' he meditated, uneasily. Then his flat, straight-cut lips closed in a hard line, and he added, as he turned shortly away: But I ain't a-goin' to ask her. When a man can't be master in his own house it's time for him to burn it down, or blow his brains out.'

Mrs. Spencer heard his heavy heels resounding on the hard-beaten path as he went around the house, and each relentless step seemed to grind its way into her quivering nerves. Ordinarily she would have taken note of his movements at the edge of a window shade, for her husband's anger had always been a dreadful thing to her. But now she opened the outer door and stood there, watching while he brought a horse and wagon out of the barn and drove rapidly away. When he had passed out of sight she exclaimed bitterly:

'I'll not stand it! I'll hide myself! I'll get out of this before he gets back with that gang, if I drop dead in my tracks!'

As a first and very womanish step in the execution of her resolve, she sat down on the doorstep and cried. Her meagre frame shook with dry convulsive sobs, such as are born of worn-out nerves, aching muscles, a lonely heart, and a starved soul.

She did not heed approaching footsteps, and scarcely started when a neighbor paused at the foot of the steps and spoke to her.

'Why, Mis' Spencer, what's the matter? I hope nothin' 's gone wrong?'

Mrs. Spencer's sobs ceased and her face hardened as she met the woman's inquiring eyes.

'It ain't nothin' that I want to talk about, Mis' Howard. I've about got to the end of my rope, that's all. I'm tired of livin', and wish to heaven I was dead this minute.'

Mrs. Howard held up her hands,

'Don't say that, Mis' Spencer,' she remonstrated. 'Now, I don't know what's gone wrong, and I haint the least notion of tryin' to find out; I only beg of you not to wish you was dead. It's such a fearful wish. We don't any of us know what death is.'

'We all know it's rest, and that's all I care to know,' said Mrs. Spencer. She leaned her chin on her hands, her elbows on her knees, and gazed into vacancy with red-rimmed, unlovely eyes.

'No, we don't even know that,' said Mrs. Howard, with impressive earnestness. 'That's just one of the things we've been taught, and we like to think its so. We don't know the first thing about death, Mis' Spencer, except that it turns us cold and stiff and fits us for the grave. We don't any of us know what goes with the livin', thinkin', sufferin' part of us. Sometimes I think maybe it stays with us in the grave, so that we hear and know things, same as when we was livin'. I shouldn't wonder if we could lay in our graves and hear the birds singin', and the rain fallin', and feel the sun shinin' above us. Now, s'posin' you was in your grave, out there in the little buryin' ground in the meader, and s'posin you could hear these little chicks chipin' to be fed at sundown, and you not here to feed 'em; and cows comin' up the lane to be milked, and you not here to milk 'em; and your husband trudgin' home, slow, and tired, and hungry, and you not here to get supper for him. Do you reckon you could rest then, Mis' Spencer?

'And s'posin' that after a bit you'd hear some other woman's voice a-callin' the chickens, and some other woman's hands rattlin' the stove lids around a-startin' a fire to cook supper for your husband? You'd most likely want to get up out of your grave then, but you couldn't. You'd just have to lay there and hear things goin' on without you, day in and day out, year in and year out, and watch youself goin' to pieces inch by inch and crumblin' to dust. There wouldn't be much rest about that, Mis' Spencer, would there now?'

Mrs. Spencer arose with the slow painfulness of stiffened rheumatic joints and turned a shocked resentful face upon her visitor.

'Mis' Howard,' she said, 'if I found a fellow mortal in trouble, and couldn't think of a single comfortin' thing to say to her, I'd go away and leave her alone; I wouldn't try to knock out the last prop from under her. If a body can't b'lieve in the rest that' in the grave, I'd like to know what we can b'lieve in! I never heard such scand'lous doctrine since I w s born.'

She turned abruptly and went into the house, closing the door between herself and her unorthodox neighbor, and listened until the sound of recoding footsteps died away.

'There, I hope she's gone, with her croakin'. I was that afeard she'd hang around and hinder me too long. Lard, 4 o'clock a-ready!' as a timepiece in an inner room gave four hard, metallic strokes. She hurried into the bedroom and came out rolling a pair of heavy gray blankets into an uncouth bundle. Then she took a bottle from a shelf in the pantry and filled it with rich, sweet milk. As she put the cork in she stopped and listened; then opened the door a little way and listened again intently.

'Wheels!' she ejaculated. 'Now, if it should be them, goodness help me to get into the cornfield before they come in sight!'

She caught up the blankets and snatched a raspberry pie, in its tin plate, from the table. Thus equipped for fight she opened the door and went hurriedly out. At the foot of the steps the brood of little chickens met her in full force, fluttering around her feet and impeding her progress.

'Shoo! Shoo!'

She pushed them aside with one foot, and waved the pie at them frantically; but they followed close at her skirts, with dismal chirps that went to her heart.

'Poor little things, how well they know it's their supper time! If I'd only had time to feed 'em. Like as not nobody else'll think to do it.'

She hesitated and looked back at them, pityingly. But the rattle of wheels sounded closer now, and her heart hardened. She went on again, striving to redouble her speed; but the blankets were cumbersome, and the raspberry pie was shedding its sticky juice up her sleeve.

Her arms were near to breaking and tears and perspiration mingled in the hollows of her cheeks when at last she reached the cornfield and stumbled in between the tall green rows. She dropped the blankets and almost fell upon them in her exhaustion The bottle and pie were allowed to shift for themselves, and the latter poured out the last remnant of its crimson juice at the roots of a cornhill.

Presently Mrs Spencer sat up and listened again. She could no longer hear the sound of wheels, nor any sound save the rustling of the millions of corn blades in the great field about her, and the voice of a meadow lark singing from the top of a tall charred stump near by. She sat still and rested a little while longer, then she stood up and tried to see the house, but the tasselled tops of the corn were two feet above her head. She made her way cautiously to the outer row and peered out between the stalks, but the low sun beat straight into her eyes, and the higher ground of the meadow, full of haycocks, intervened. She could see only the weather-worn roofs of the house and barn. She crept back and took up her burden again of blankets and bottle and pie and trudged on deeper into the sheltering labyrinth of corn. When she had put half the width of the field between herself and the house she felt safe for the time being, and sat down again to rest and bide her time.

Her objective point was an old dugout in in the face of a stony ridge just beyond the cornfield. It had been constructed for a potato cellar, and was used only for storing those edible tubers in winter. From March to November it was empty and forgotten, given over to rats and spiders. She had chosen it for her refuge over all other nooks and crannies on the farm because of its isolation. No roving member of the objectionable "gang" would be likely to stumble upon it and discovered her. But it was well up the face of the ridge and visible from the house; so she did not think it best to risk discovery by approaching it in open day.

She partly unrolled the blankets and lay down upon them, turning her worn face up to the sky with a deep-drawn breath of rest and a delicious new sense of freedom. Her close environment of tall corn shut out the horizon, but she knew when the sun had sunk below it by the tinted glow that overspread her small vista of sky and the fresher breeze that came whispering among the corn blades, precursor of the coming night.

After a time dark shadows began creeping along the furrows, as if striving to steal upon her unawares, and in the purpling firmament above two or three pale stars took form and blinked coldly down at her. She sat up and shivered, and her heart sank a little at the thought of the potato cellar and the lonely night.

'Dew's a-fallin'!' she exclaimed in dismay, with care for her rheumatism, and as quickly as might be she gathered up her belongings and resumed her flight. In the fast-gathering night the way to the potato cellar seemed long and rough, and when she had reached it she found it a stronghold defended by wild blackberry vines that she must tear away with her naked hands before she could gain an entrance.

The clumsy door opened outward and yielded only inch by inch to her repeated jerks. Each time a blackberry vine was wrenched out by the roots it brought down a shower of loosened gravel upon her defenceless head from the crumbling banks that towered high on either side. But at last a dark aperture yawned before her wide enough to give her entrance. She wondered why she had not foreseen the need of a candle and some matches, as she groped her way within and pulled the door shut. As she did so there came a great roar and crash of falling gravel outside. It sounded a perfect avalanche, and she congratulated herself on having escaped it.

The atmosphere of the little cave like place was close and musty from long lack of ventilation, and Mrs. Spencer found the abrupt change from the pure outer air almost stifling. She decided that she must reopen the door and leave it so through the night. But when she attempted to do it she found it immovable, held shut by the mass of gravel that had fallen against it. The discovery left her aghast.

'Why, now—if I can't get out, and nobody has the least notion where I am, why—its most like bein' buried alive!'

The situation was disheartening, but the direst foreboding must yield to extreme bodily weariness, and soon she had spread her blankets on the dry straw of a potato bin and stretched her aching frame upon them.

For an hour or more her mental worry and her rheumatism united in tormenting her, then came sleep, and wooed her to rest with the welcome thought of no breakfast to get in the morning, and no disturbing voice to break in upon her slumbers with the announcement of 'gettin-up time.'

But she dreamed, and all through her dream sounded the chirping of hungry little chickens, the lowing of unmilked cows, and the slow heavy tread of her husband's feet coming up the lane at evening time. 'Tired and hungry, and you not here to get supper for him,' droned the voice of her neighbor running like a dirge through the other sounds, and making of the dream a wretched, haunting nightmare.

'Drat that Mis' Howard! I'll never speak to her again,' was Mrs. Spencer's first waking thought. A thin shaft of daylight with the yellow glint of a well-risen sun in it, was forcing its way into the cellar through a crevice an inch wide above the door. Involuntarily Mrs. Spencer sat up and listened for the familiar sounds of her dream. But she heard only the bickering of a pair of wrens in the blackberry vines outside, and the scurry of a rat that scampered across the cellar floor and plunged into his hole in a corner. This served to draw her attention to her surroundings.

In an opposite bin lay some sorry looking potatoes, with long ghostly white sprouts and a winding sheet of cobwebs. Near the centre of the earth floor stood a battered old sheet-iron stove, with some rusty joints of pipe rising to the thatched roof, ten feet above. The hired men had set it up during the cold snap in March and built a fire in it to keep themselves warm while they cut potatoes for seeding. A dozen matches and a clay pipe half full of burned tobacco lay on its hearth forgotten.

Mrs. Spencer felt a little light-headed when she stood up, and thus was brought to remember that she had eaten nothing since noon of the preceding day. She looked about for the pie and bottle of milk. The latter was intact, but the former had vanished, leaving only its tin plate as tangible evidence that it had existed. Two little knowing, exultant eyes were shining up from the rat hole in the corner. Mrs. Spencer looked troubled.

'Well'—a long, quivering breath—'I certainly said I wished I was dead, but slow starvation is a little more'n I bargained for.'

She spoke aloud and shrank from the sound of her own voice, it was so shut in and sepulchral. She turned to the door and now strove with all her strength to push it open, but it withstood the onslaught without a tremor.

She desisted at length, and sat down on an upturned apple box exhausted, and gasping for breath. The place was stifling. Oh for a breath of pure sweet air! Her outraged lungs seemed burning in her breast, and her mouth and throat were parched. She opened the bottle of milk and took a portion. She was tempted to drink it all at one welcome draught, but refrained, and recorked it up again resolutely.

Daring the long hours of the afternoon she attacked the door repeatedly, but always futilely, and finally, when the sweltering August sun had passed the meridian and was beating down mercilessly on her retreat, she gave up and burst into a wild fit of weeping, she crept back into her bin and lay down on her blankets.

Hours later, when she had wept a great deal and slept a little, she opened her swollen eyes and saw the red gold of sunset shining in above the door.

'Twenty-four hours,' she said to herself, and a great longing came upon her to know how 'Abra'm' and the old home were doing without her. She dragged the apple box close to the door and mounted upon it, thus bringing her eyes to a level with the crevice. There lay the farmhouse and its peaceful surroundings spread out below her like a quaint, sun-kissed old picture, but oh, how distant it was, how far beyond the sound of her voice, even though she should shriek aloud. The broad meadow and the great field of rustling corn lay between.

At first there was no sign of life about the place, except the patient cows standing in the lane waiting for the bars to be let down. But presently, while she waited and watched for the men to come in from their work in the far north meadow, she described a curl of smoke rising from the kitchen chimney. A queer, ghastly caricature of a smile flashed across her face.

'Now, if I was near enough to hear the stove-lids rattle,' she whispered, 'I could most imagine I was dead and in my grave like Mis' Howard said.'

For a long time she stood with her eyes at the crevice, and her hands grasping the rough frame of the cellar door, watching that changing, darkening spiral of smoke. Once the kitchen door opened and a woman stood in sight. The watcher squinted her eyes in a desperate endeavor to concentrate her gaze.

'I s'pose it's Mis' Rhynearson,' she muttered, with a resentful snap in her tones. 'It's just like her cheek to take possession of a body's house and act as if she owned it! I can't see how Abra'm can like them Rhynearsons so well; they're such pestiferous folks. To think of her there, a-livin' high off the fresh bread and cakes and pies that I baked and the cheese I made, and the butter I churned and me here a-starvin'!'

The contrast was too pitiful. In all her hard, meagre life she had never before known the pangs of hunger and thirst. Her eyes filled and the vision was for a time shut out. When she looked again the curling smoke was scarcely discernible, and all the angles of the old house were toned down by the softening shadow of approaching night.

She could make out the figure of a man standing by the bars. It might be one of the hands, or—it might be—yes, it was Abra'm! He had turned and was going slowly toward the house, and she knew him by the forward stoop of his body and that characteristic something in the way he set his feet down as he walked.

She thought he would go in at the kitchen door, but he passed on around to the front porch and sat down alone on the steps.

Presently it struck her that his head was bowed upon his hands, and that his attitude was one of deep dejection. But she was not quite, sure; he was so far away, and the shadows lay deep between. Still, the longer she looked the more his fading outline seemed to appeal to her, until at last she was overcome with the conviction that sorrow, rather than anger, ruled in her husband's heart

'He ain't mad at me! I just seem to feel he ain't mad at me! Oh, Abra'm! Abra'm!'

She shrieked his name aloud again and again, each frenzied effort shriller than the last; but the narrow crevice threw the greater part of the sound back into the cellar, and Abraham Spencer sat still, with bent head, unhearing, until the night had thickened and shut him from her sight.

The black hours that followed were terrible to her. Remorse and a reawakened longing to live, and to go back to her deserted duties, now united with hunger and thirst to torture her. In the middle of the hot, stifling night, she was forced to drain the last swallow of milk from the bottle, and still her thirst was so great that she tossed and moaned in the fitful bits of sleep that came to her. Once she was awakened by a touch, a weight like that of a hand upon her shoulder, and she started up with a glad cry on her lips; but it was only her cell-mate, the rat. He scampered away to his own corner, and she lay there with a convulsive horror upon her, watching and listening lest he return. She told herself that he would come back tomorrow night, when she would have less strength to frighten him away; and all the nights after—when her poor body might lie there lifeless, at his mercy.

She wondered, with an awful shuddering wonder, whether it could be that her soul must linger near and witness the degrading annihilation of its erstwhile tenement. A maddening horror of death seized her. She staggered across to the opposite bin and made a desperate attempt to eat one of the raw, mouldy potatoes.

At the first hint of morning she was again on the apple box with her eyes at the crevice. But now there was a thick white fog all over the land, and not the vaguest outline of her home was visible to her.

The wrens were bickering spitefully over their nest, not an arm's length away from her face.

'Oh, hush!' she said to them, pityingly, from the bitter depths of her own experience. 'You poor, blind little things, you don't know how short life is, after all, and how little it matters if things don't go just to suit you.'

The small pair were struck motionless and dumb by the mere sound of her voice and forgot to renew their quarrel. Presently the father bird went away to his day's work, and the little mother settled down to the monotony of her home duties, both unconscious of the yearning eyes of the lone watcher at the crevice.

Many times that day she crept back and forth between the bin and the apple box. When her head swam and her trembling limbs gave way beneath her she would stagger to the bin and fall upon the blankets. But no sleep came, and no rest, and after a time her strength so far forsook her that she could no longer mount upon the box. Then she lay still and gazed at the strip of light above the door until it seemed a streak of fire scorching her eyeballs.

And all the time she was listening, listening for the sound of a footstep or a voice.

Thus the night found her, and again added its horror of darkness and rats. The fever of hunger and thirst was upon her. Her tongue and lips were swollen, and a devouring flame burned in her vitals. Her senses were no longer normal, and she heard sounds and saw objects that had no existence in reality.

All night long she watched the dark corner where the rat dwelt, and her distorted fancy magnified him into a monster of the jungle; in the cunning of semi-delirium she made plans to frighten him and keep him at bay, and finally in the dark hour before dawn, she crept stealthily from the bin, whispering, through her swelled lips:

'Fire! Fire will keep him away!'

She clutched an armful of straw and crawled on hands and knees across the earthern floor to the sheet-iron stove. Keeping keen watch of the dread corner, she thrust the straw into the stove and groped for the matches on its hearth. A scratch, a flash, a tiny flame, then a roar!

She dragged herself to the bin and brought more straw, and more, until the thin iron of the stove and the rickety pipe clear to the roof were red and roaring. The already hot and vitiated atmosphere of the cellar was now raised to unbearable temperature, and soon she succumbed to it, falling upon the ground, face downward, in a mad effort to get away.

No longer fed, the straw fire languished and went out; but its mischief was done. The dry thatch of the roof had caught from the red-hot pipe and was blazing up slowly at first, but ever surely. Soon the cinders began to fall into the cellar, and one struck her bare-neck as she lay. She cried out with pain, and struggled a little further away; but the brands fell faster as the aperture around the pipe broadened, and her doom would have been certain had there not been another restless heart, and a pair of sleepless eyes on the old man.

The hired men were awakened by the excited voice of Abraham Spencer shouting

'Up boys, up! Bring water! The potato cellar's afire!'

He was away, with two great pails of water in his hands, before the men were fairly awake. When they followed him they found him on the roof of the cellar. He had succeeded in extinguishing the fire, and, as they approached, he suddenly dropped his pails and, falling upon his knees, crept close to the charred edge of the chasm in the roof. Leaning far over, he shaded his eyes and peered keenly into the steaming depths below. A faint moan had reached him, and now, as he listened, another came quivering up to him.

'My God!' he cried, springing up. 'She's down there, boys! Sairy! Run for shovels! Oh run! run!'

He, himself, ran like a madman, but only a little way; then he turned and ran as madly back to the cellar, where he attacked the fallen gravel with his hands, and beat and tore at the door until the heavy boards, all stained with his own blood, were rended from their fastenings and he had leaped into the cellar and caught up the prostrate figure he found there.

It was hours afterwards that Mrs. Spencer aroused from the stupor that was upon her and began to comprehend again the realities of life. She was in her own clean, soft bed, and the cool breeze of evening was fluttering the hop-vines at the window. She felt pain when she attempted to move and there were bandages on her hands, her head and her neck; but the pain was not acute, and the soothing effect of an opiate still lingered with her. Somewhere in the outer distance she heard the faint, familiar tinkle of a cowbell, and—yes, the subdued rattle of stovelids in the kitchen. She lifted her head from the pillow to listen and found her husband sitting silent, close beside her.

'Who is it, Sairy? What do you want?' he asked, as she felt the strange tenderness that vibrated in his rough voice.

'Who's in the kitchen, Abra'm Is it—Mis' Rhynearson?'

'No, Sairy, it ain't. Mis' Rhynearson went home double quick when she found there wasn't anybody here to wait on her. You knowed her better than I did, Sairy. That's Sophrony Selwood in the kitchen, and she's goin' to stay there till she dies—or gets married.'

She closed her eyes to hide the starting tears, but they forced their way through the interlaced lashes. Suddenly she turned to him and spoke the thought that filled her heart.

'Oh Abra'm, it was so long! Why didn't you try to find me? Why didn't you come sooner?'

'My land! Sairy, I never once thought of the dugout. I was too busy lookin' everywhere else for you. First of all, I drove clear over to Lizy's to see if you was there. That' a good sixteen miles, you know, and took a big slice out of the first day. Then we went to all the neighbors' and hunted the whole place over, but none of us ever thought of the dugout. I don't know why, but we did'nt. Then, that night Mis' Howard come over and told m—well, what you said to her, you know, Sairy, and she—she spoke of the crick.

'The crick?' wonderingly.

'You know, Sairy!' he suddenly bent over and put his arms around her and drew her to him. 'I was going to have the crick dragged to-day, and it I'd found you there, Sairy, I couldn't ever've stood it.'

'Pshaw, Abra'm,' she whispered, chokingly, and put up her bandaged hand to stroke the furrowed stubble of his sunburned face.

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Paine's Celery Compound the Choice of the Ablest Physicians.

It is well that every one should know that Paine's Celery Compound is not an ordinary patent medicine such as the nervines, sarsaparillas, bitters and other liquid concoctions now so extensively advertised in every direction. Paine's Celery Compound is as far beyond these common preparations as the diamond is superior to cheap glass.

Paine's Celery Compound possesses extraordinary virtues and powers for health giving and life lengthening. It is as harmless as it is good, and is the only medicine that the best medical men recommend with confidence. Professor Edward E. Phelps, M. D., its discoverer, gave this marvellous medicine to his profession as a positive cure for sleeplessness, nervousness, wasting strength, dyspepsia, biliousness, liver complaint, neuralgia, rheumatism and kidney trouble; and since its introduction to the public, hundreds of thousands on this continent have been raised from sickness to the enjoyment of perfect health. No other medicine in the world was ever so highly honored and recommended, because none ever accomplished so much.

To-day when the ablest doctors are called upon to prescribe for weak run-down over-worked and debilitated men and women, they invariably advise the use of Paine's Celery Compound. Thousands of testimonials giving proofs of almost miraculous cures come in every year from working people, artisans, merchants, professional men and people of wealth, all asserting strongly that Paine's Celery Compound makes people well.

Have you made trial of Paine's Celery Compound, sick friend? If not, do not delay another hour; procure a bottle and test the virtues of the only medicine that can successfully meet your case. Be sure that you get "Paine's" the kind that cures.

Angels' Food.

The secret in making angels' food lies in the baking of it. Sift one cup of flour and one teaspoonful of cream of tartar several times through a fine sieve. Beat the whites of nine eggs to a stiff froth and to them add one cup and a half of sifted granulated sugar; mix carefully into this stirring constantly, the sifted flour and add one teaspoonful of extract of vanilla. Pour this batter into an ungreased pan and bake in a slow oven for 45 minutes. When baked, turn the pan upside down on something that will admit of the air passing under it, and allow it to stand until the cake falls from the tin. Ice with white icing. Be careful in making this cake to have all the ingredients as light as possible.

Tobacco Heart.

Much heart and nerve weakness is caused by undue use of tea, coffee, or tobacco; palpitation, nervousness, irritability, excitability, lack of confidence, etc., are sure symptoms. Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills bring ready relief, by steadying the nerves and regulating the heart. They are a true heart and nerve food.

Suitable.

Mr. Cumso—'I have bought you a book for your railway journey which you will appreciate, my dear.

Mrs. Cumso—'How kind of you! What is its title?'

Mr. Cumso—'It is a mileage book.'