

really am, more than I can tell. I'm going to try to do everything that the Bible tells me, an' that Christians tell me, an' I'll take you up at your offer whenever I want advice. I could be the best man in the world if it wasn't for—for—oh, Squire, if you would only give me work—steady work—so I wouldn't all the time be full of torment about mother!"

The Squire's face froze at once into its accustomed lines; his tears disappeared; he dropped Lem's hand and said:

"That's out of the question, Lemuel; you know you can't do my work, an' I can't keep two men. It'll all come right—'Seek first the kingdom of God an' His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' I ain't got time to talk any more now, for here comes the widow Meer with a crock of butter, an' it takes her a long time to trade. Commit thy way unto the Lord, an' he shall bring it to—Butter, Mrs. Meer?—let's look at it; there's so much butter comin' in just now that we don't care to trade for any that ain't first class."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HERO FORMS SOME MONEVED ACQUAINTANCES.

Lem hurried through the village toward the forest, in which the main street seemed to end. He walked so fast that the boys at the blacksmith's shop stopped work to stare, and approaching countrymen looked enquiringly, and unconsciously slackened the pace of their slow-walking horses, as if they expected some news. Arrived at last at the edge of the woods, he threw himself on the door-step of an abandoned toll-gate house, and groaned. For a few moments he breathed short and quick, as exhausted people always do, and then he began to murmur to himself:

"I wish to God I could die. I wonder if it is wrong for a feller to kill himself? If I was dead mother and the children wouldn't ever have any disappointment on my account any more. I wish I didn't ever have to see anybody in Mount Zion again; everybody looks at me this morning as if I was a menagerie. *Can't* somebody ever even think to say a kind word, or even *look* kind, I wonder, to a poor feller that never asks anything else of 'em but what he's willin' to work for? The Squire—he is just what everybody says—I swear he is; I wish I'd have died before I met him this mornin'; nothin' ever made the world look so awful before."

Inside the building, and but a few feet from Lem, two men had listened to what he had said, and were now carrying on an animated conversation with every feature except their lips. One of them, who looked like a weazel not greatly overgrown, shook his head vigorously in favour of some argument which his eyes had advanced; the other, large, dark, sinister and heavily bearded, seemed in a receptive mood, but not convinced. Lem continued:

"An' all this time there's mother a-waitin' an' a-hopin' an' a-listenin' for the mail-carrier, an' a-goin' to the post office an' a-comin' away without any letter, an' a-wonderin' whether I'm dead; an' here's me, that hain't got grit to tell her I hain't got any money to send her. Great God! Ain't it bad enough to be a good-for-nothin' rack of bones that's no comfort to myself, without havin' to be in this hell about money?"

Again the weazel-faced man inside snapped his eyes and set his teeth and shook his head furiously, and his companion yielded so far as to raise his eyebrows a trifle and look a little less sullen.

"Talk about sellin' a man's soul for money," Lem went on; "I'd sell *mine*—I'd sell it to the devil, if he wanted it, an' do it cheap. Nobody else seems to want it—p'raps them that's got money got it the same way. That old picture in the Sunday-school book about the devil holdin' a bag of gold, an' ev'rybody runnin' after it—just wouldn't I like to be in that crowd? I wish he'd come along here this minute."

The smile which the weazel-faced man cast upon his companion, as he vigorously thrust forth a finger at him, indicated sufficiently that the devil was closer than Lem supposed; while the glare of satisfaction which came into the large man's eyes, would have impressed a beholder with the demonological idea that Satan was of divided or distributed personality. The small man softly arose and left the building, followed by his companion; the small man took from his pocket a roll of bills, and selected one of the denomination of twenty dollars, which he held up for the inspection of the other man, and received a nod in acknowledgment. Then they both made a short detour in the woods, and reached a point in the road not far from the gate-house. Here the tall man laid down by the road-side, while the smaller man, assuming an air of great agitation, hurried on to the house and addressed Lem:

"Stranger," said he, "do you want to make ten dollars?"

Lem sprang to his feet in an instant.

"Go right to town and buy me a dollar bottle of arnica liniment; my mate's got a