

At first he did not seem to have anything to say, but after Miss Lyon had told him, with tears in her eyes, how inexpressibly grateful she was for what he had done, for saving her life, perhaps; and how all the city was talking of his bravery, and calling him a little hero, his face brightened up, and he became more communicative.

'Pshaw! Miss Lyon, it was jest nothin'; any kid would have done what I did! I don't see what they want to make such a rumpus about it for. You see I'd been over to Hadley to the football game, me and Jim Birdsall. Jim he got a ride back with a man he know'd, and I had to come alone. It was mean of Jim. It was a long walk, and I didn't git started till late. I was almost up to the factory when you came out. I know'd it were you, and thought first I'd catch up with you, but then I felt kindy ashamed—you see I ain't treated you very square at Sunday school, Miss Lyon—but I warn't far behind when the toughs laid for you. I got down by the boards at first, 'cause I was queer of the gent's gun; but when I seen the other rascal grab you, then I warn't afraid no more—I jest picked up a big stone—I didn't dare chuck it for fear of hittin' you—and crept up behind the black-guard, and held it fast in my hand and jumped and plumped him a good one right on the head. It did him up fine—he didn't whistle—he jest dropped; and I'll bet he'll have a sore head for a while yet. I was goin' to let drive at the other fellow, but he was too quick for me with his shootin' machine, and he give it to me right in the breast and I tumbled, but I saw him skeddaddle, anyhow, for a waggon was coming down the avenue, and they had heard his shot. And after that I don't know nothin' about it, but I guess I lay there on the ground by the side of you and the man I hit; and I heard the doctor say the next morning that I must have lost a heap of blood; I guess so, for I don't feel very brisk.'

Miss Lyon took the boy's hand in her own and talked to him, hopefully, of how he would soon be all right again, and of what good friends they would always be now.

'No, Miss Lyon, 'tain't no use for you to say that; I'm a goner—I know it; I've seen how the doctor shakes his head when he and the nurse whisper about me, and I can feel it here in my breast. But I ain't afraid to die. I've been thinking about that Jesus a good deal these two days I've laid here—I remember most everything you used to tell about him, though I didn't pay much attention when you talked in Sunday school. It kindly seems as though I love this Jesus a great big lot. I've been a hard case, I know, but you said he didn't hold no grudge agin a fellow who gives right up and loves him. And last night he was sort of right near me here all the time—I prayed a good bit—my prayers weren't no great shakes, but I felt jest like I was talkin' to him, and it did me a powerful sight of good. If I was a-goin' to get well agin, I would tell him what a different kind of a fellow I'd be—but I ain't, you see, and so all I can do is jest to pray and think about him; but I guess it'll be all right, don't you? Anyhow, when I get up there to heaven, if there's any trouble about it, I'll jest tell this Jesus about knowin' you, and how I was in your Sunday school class, and then it'll be all O.K., sure.'

Th boy had talked too long and was now very weak, so Miss Lyon went away, promising to come and see him the next afternoon.

But the next day a little, cold form was all that was left of the Dabney boy there in the hospital—his life had gone to be with the

Jesus whom he had learned to love in those last few days, taught by the remembrance of a patient Sunday school teacher's seemingly unheeded instruction. The Dabney boy had been reformed sooner than Miss Lyon had expected.

Ralph Holman's Surprise.

(By Albert F. Caldwell, in 'Forward'.)

It was a puzzle to everyone why Ralph Holman had sold his growing laundry business for the rocky Tubbs place, two miles above the village of Lennox.

'He must have been beside himself to buy that rocky hillside of a farm,' commented Aunt Sarah Jackson, with a positive shake of her head. Every one who didn't believe and do exactly as she did was always regarded by Aunt Sarah 'a bit off' or 'just a trifle queer.'

'There's water enough on it in the pond; that's all there is as I can see, but it takes something besides water to bring up a family on; it's good enough for the outside, but the inside generally needs something more fillin'.'

Now that Ralph Holman was dead, the village people had a graver problem than ever to solve—how could Mrs. Holman with those six children get a living.

If it was a grave question to outsiders, it was doubly so to grave Mrs. Holman.

'I'm afraid your father made a mistake, Nan,' she said wearily to her oldest daughter. Nan was sixteen, strong, determined, and self-reliant; 'a veritable host in herself,' often, strenuously, declared her father, with a look of pride in his deep grey eyes. 'Why he sold out and came up here is a great mystery, and I'm afraid 'twill always remain so. It's too bad, when we were doing so well where we were, but he said we'd never be sorry; there'd come a time when we'd see the wisdom of his move,' and Mrs. Holman, utterly discouraged, looked out of the little back window, across a patch of mullein stalks, where her eyes rested on the shadows of the eight-acre pond.

'Queer your father took such a liking to that water. He was always making measurements, and watching to see if the surface lowered any in the dry spells; but no matter how severe the droughts have been its depth hasn't been affected any.'

'Perhaps he wanted to stock it with fish, mother,' suggested Nan, going to the window and peering out. 'You know the hotels down in the village find it difficult to get trout enough for their summer boarders. Perhaps that was what father's surprise was going to be. Anyway, he wouldn't have brought us here if he hadn't had something in mind; and now father's gone, we've got to find out what it is, and I'm going to do it.'

'We can't go on living here, there's no use talking,' and Mrs. Holman rose abruptly and closed the window. 'I've about made up my mind to sell. Of course, we'll not try to get away till we have harvested the crops. Squire Bean was up to-day and made an offer of eight hundred dollars.'

'Squire Bean!' exclaimed Nan, in amazement. 'Why, he was the one who called father a fool for taking the place, and now you say he wants to buy it! Did he say anything about the pond?'

'Yes, he referred to it; said he'd be willing to give fifty dollars more if it wasn't on the place, taking up so much of the pasture land. He wants to turn the whole farm into a pasture; says that's all the land's good for. You know there's no timber here; and the house's only a shelter at best.'

But father had plans for fixing that, mother, so 'twould be comfortable and cosy.'

'I know, child, with money it might be done; but how'd we ever do it! It's been all we could do to get a bare living and pay the taxes. I think we'd better not let such a chance go by; it will not come again.'

'But, mother,' argued Nan, 'father paid more than eight hundred for it, and the farm is certainly worth more than it was when he took it.'

'Not in market value. Squire Bean says real estate is depreciating continually; and he ought to be a fairly good judge, buying and selling as much as he does.'

'Mother mustn't let the farm go; she mustn't,' declared Nan, again and again, to herself that night, long after it was quiet in the little wood-colored house on the hill. 'What would father think?' He said he'd have a surprise for us some time if the village continued to grow, and it has. Three new streets have been laid out already, since we moved away, and we've been here only eighteen months. They've had two fires there, but the houses have been built right up again.'

Nan started violently at her own thought. 'They need it—yes, they do,' she whispered, excitedly, and—and—that's what Squire Bean wants of it!

Then she remembered having seen the shrewd old lawyer somewhere about the pond, after each one of the fires, or in the run leading to the village, as though making an examination of it.

The next Tuesday, as Nan came from the potato patch, Squire Bean was just driving away.

'I think I've sold it,' said Mrs. Holman, evasively, as Nan set the basket of new potatoes on the kitchen table. 'I insisted on having eight hundred and fifty dollars, and I think he'll give it. Of course, if he refuses, I'll take the eight hundred.'

'When's he going to decide?' and there was a tremor in Nan's voice.

'Not until next week. He says he has a case coming off in court to-morrow, at Bridgeton, and he can't be back until a week from Thursday. When he comes, if he concludes to take it, he's going to bring the papers all ready for me to sign. I gave him till Thursday evening to close the sale. I thought it best to set a time limit, so he wouldn't think I was over-anxious, but really 'twill make no difference.'

'It must make a difference! it's the only way to save father's surprise,' exclaimed Nan, brokenly but determinedly, the next morning, as she hurried along, almost blindly, down the rocky hill road leading to the village. 'What would father say—to—sell—his surprise—and I think I've found it—to—the one who called him a fool?' and Nan struggled bravely to control her feelings.

She paused for a moment to collect herself before the office door of the Harper Manufacturing Company.

'Come,' was the laconic answer to her determined knock.

It was over an hour before Nan left Mr. Harper, the wealthiest and most influential citizen of the town.

'Queer I never thought of it before,' he was saying, his hand on the door knob. 'It's just what we've needed for years—both for a water supply and a protection against fire. That pond's worth a gold mine to its owner.'

'Do you think Squire Bean can hold mother to her offer?' asked Nan, anxiously.

'I'm afraid so. Your only safety lies in his not closing the bargain Thursday evening. If he shouldn't go with his papers till