

HOW WE RENTED THE FARM ON SHARES

(An Old-Time Memory)

You see, the way on't why we rented the place at all wuz on account of help, or rather the want of it.

Early in the spring Josiah and I lost the best help we ever had. Ury and Philury, who had lived with us year in and year out, and good every year and all the year round, made up their minds to go to the West. Ury hearn that he could do splendid out to the Michigan where his brother Moses lived. Moses had lost his wife and urged Ury's folks to come and move right in with 'em. He held out splendid expectations, and Ury wuz dazzled by 'em.

Well, of course, bein' left with the farm on his hands Josiah had to do somethin'. Good, faithful help couldn't be found and so he concluded to rent the farm on shares—we to have half of everything, and the man half. And the man he let it to, I didn't like his looks from the first on't. He had a kind of a meechin' look and looked some like his sir-name; his name wuz Elam Craft. Now, Elam did his work middlin' well, and didn't drink nor cut up and act, but oh, how clost he wuz! and how tricky! and how that clost, hateful disposition of hisen cropped out.

You see, lettin' out the farm on shares, one horse, or rather mair, wuz all we needed, for Josiah and me, we didn't go on any very long towers, and the mair wuz enough, and, as the poet sez, enough is as good as a feast. But somehow in makin' the bargain Elam fixed it so with my good onsuspectin' pardner that he made him think as he wuz to have half of everything he ort to have half of the horse and half of the cow; we always saved one cow out of the dairy for our own use.

Well, I told Josiah when he come home and told me how the bargain run that we would see trouble with that claws in the papers. But it wuz too late then to interfere; the papers wuz made out and signed. But didn't my words come true? Yes indeed they did! And the trouble we see can never be truly told on. Every time a'most that we wanted to use the mair to ride out Elam would say that he had got to use his half on her some other way, and what could we do? How could we drive our half to mill or meetin' with his half on't plowin' or cultivatin'? And Josiah wanted to use his half doin' a little work in our garden (we reserved a good garden) why then Elam would want to take his half and go off to the store or somewhere with it, or visitin' his wife's folks, and what could we do? The writin's wuz drawed. And then Josiah is tender-hearted, and has always follered the Bible rule and been merciful to his beast, and Elam insisted that it wuz his right to chastise his half of the horse if he wanted to, and he would whip it jest to be mean, and when Josiah complained he would look up as innocent and say, "Why, I hain't touched your half of the horse, have I? What right have you to complain? You can pompey your side all you're a minter and spile it—spare the rod and spile the mair—but my half of that critter has got to mind." And he never did touch the whip only on his half as we could see. And then sometimes cold days, when Josiah thought she ort to be blanketed, he would flare up and say his half wuz too hot as it wuz; he didn't want her to git swetty, and he wouldn't have it touched, and how could Josiah make the blanket stay on his half? Poor old critter! I've seen Josiah almost weep tellin' me about it.

And feedin' on't; she had been used to bein' fed generous, but Elam said that high feedin' wuz liable to bring on appoplexy (appoplexy in a horse! who ever hearn on't?). And so he jest stented and starved his half

on't knowin' Josiah would make it up and not see that good patient-eyed old mair sufferin' for food. And when he felt shiftless he wouldn't water his half on't regular at all, and my poor pardner had to do that.

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And the same with shuein' her: Elam pretended that it made horses healthy to go barefoot, and he brung up the new fad a' eminent doctor had of makin' his patients walk barefoot in the mornin' dew, and he said he wanted to try it on the mair. Elam had been off a-visitin' over a' awful stunny road and he come back with the mair's shues all off. Josiah had just had her shod, and Elam had ort to replaced 'em. But no! he said he wanted to try this new doctorin'. He said that if it give so much vitality to a human bein' it would be still better for a horse, they havin' four feet instead of two to draw the electricity and healin' virtues from the earth, and 'tenyrate he shouldn't shue his half on her at all. So, of course, rather than have the mair go unshod my pardner wuz to the expense on't.

And Elam, jest to be mean, kep' hintin' that he wuz goin' to cut off the mair's tail; he said that it wuz fur more stylish short. He knew Josiah felt that the mair ort to have her tail in hot weather to use as a fan, and to keep the flies off. But Elam kep' up his hintin' and insinuatn' that he wuz goin' to cut it off. It kep' Josiah in a stew all the time; but I knew he wouldn't, for he dassent touch only his half on't, and how would it look with half off? And they did enjoy drivin' the mair the best that ever wuz. You see they never had a horse to drive before—they wuz as poor as poverty—and them are the very ones to cut a big swath, give 'em a chance. He'd always been driv' round by somebody and now he wuz bound to drive when he got the chance.

And they acted jest as mean with the cow. Josiah wanted it milked at the same time night and mornin', as the right way is; but Elam, if he took it into his head to, would up and milk his half of her when the sun wuz two hours high, or in the mornin' by candle-light, and how did we know but he milked more than his half? We couldn't tell, and of course the cow wouldn't say anything. I tried to better matters by proposin' that we should milk her one week and Elam the next, or divide it by days, he one and we one. But no, he had to milk his half every day and when he wuz a-minter, and we had to put up with it, for the writin's wuz drawed.

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But the worm will turn if tromped on too severe. One day we wuz goin' on invitation to Loontown to visit the relation on Josiah's side for a day or two. Josiah wuz out harnessin', and Elam went out to the barn and said we couldn't have the mair, for he had got to take his half on't and go way-up beyend Zoar for lumber. Josiah did sprunt up and say: "You tarnal critter, you! You used the hull of the mair all last week and I didn't say nothin', and now I'll take my half of that mair to-day and to-morrow if I cut her right in two and draw half on't myself in the democrat."

Well, Elam see that Josiah wuz in earnest and he gin up. He wuz makin' too good a thing out on't to have it divided in the old Bible way. And so we sot off on our tower, havin' a tussel about the cow the last thing. For he said, jest to be mean, that he shouldn't milk only jest his half whilst we wuz away. But Josiah told him that he had engaged Zeb Petrie to milk his half, and Elam felt beat enough, for he knew Zeb would git his half of the milk if he had to live under a' umbrell' out

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