

of imaginary dust. Then she sat down by the window to hem some towels. She paused occasionally in her sewing, to look out across the quiet valley to the distant hills; but her thoughts journeyed beyond the hills, out into the world where her children had gone when they left the shelter of the home nest. She thought of them always with fond pride, for they were dutiful, loving sons and daughters. Ned and Tom were successful business men, Alice had married a lawyer and Harriet a doctor. In the early years of their married life her children often came home, and a month seldom passed without one or another of them cheering the old home with a short visit. As their family and business cares increased they came less frequently, but Martha and Daniel had always been sure of one visit a year when all the children came home for Thanksgiving. It would be different this year, thought Martha sadly. The sons were going West for a few weeks to inquire into the desirability of some proposed investments, and Alice and Harriet, after much pleading on the part of the young people, had promised their college boys and girls a Thanksgiving house party. It was a keen disappointment to the old couple and as Martha folded the last towel she sighed to think how lonely the day would be. As she rose to put away her work, she glanced through

the window and saw a man and a woman in a buggy at the gate.

As she hurried down the walk to greet the visitors, the bright, eager face of Martha Ware fell a trifle for she saw that the occupants of the buggy were good-natured, easy going Philip Riker and Jane, his wife, who was the neighborhood gossip and whose sharp tongue spared neither old nor young, friend nor enemy. But hospitable Martha greeted them cordially:

"Just tie your horse, Philip, and come into the house with Jane and me. Daniel ought to be here soon, he's gone to the bottom for a load of corn fodder."

"No, we can't come in," responded Jane, stiffly. "We just stopped to ask if you was sick, seein' that you wasn't at church today."

"Why, we never heard a word about it till noon today. I knew she was ailing but we'd no idea that she was dead. I'd have liked to go to the funeral—I always liked Laura. Who's going to take the children? It'd be a pity if they'd have to be separated. Poor little tots—how they'll miss their ma!"

"Funeral! What funeral? There wasn't no funeral in Mapleton today that I heard of."

"No, not in Mapleton; Mt. Zion, I mean, Laura Green that was—she always tended church there and there was where she wanted to be buried."



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"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Jane disgustedly. "Is it Laura you're talking about? She wasn't buried at Mt. Zion today any more than I was. I saw her own cousin, Mary Hoover, this morning. She had a letter yesterday, saying that Laura's a lot better and the doctor says she's going to get well."

"Well, I'm right glad to hear that, but what was going on at Mapleton church today? When Daniel took the trade and a load of punkins in, there wasn't a soul in sight excepting Gran'ma Smith, and the postoffice and Thornberry's store was both closed."

"Closed!" echoed Jane tartly; "course they was closed. Anxious as Jim Thornberry is to turn an honest penny, he's too good a church member to keep his store open on Sunday, even if the law allowed it."

"Sunday—church," quavered Martha; "why—why Jane, this is Saturday. Why, Daniel finished the corn huskin' this morning and hauled a load of punkins to market; and I churned."

"So it's all true, then! When Sam Perkins said he saw Uncle Daniel Ware huskin' corn this morning we thought it was only a joke. Uncle Daniel Ware, that's been a pillar in the Mapleton church ever since I can remember. I wouldn't have thought it of him, never."

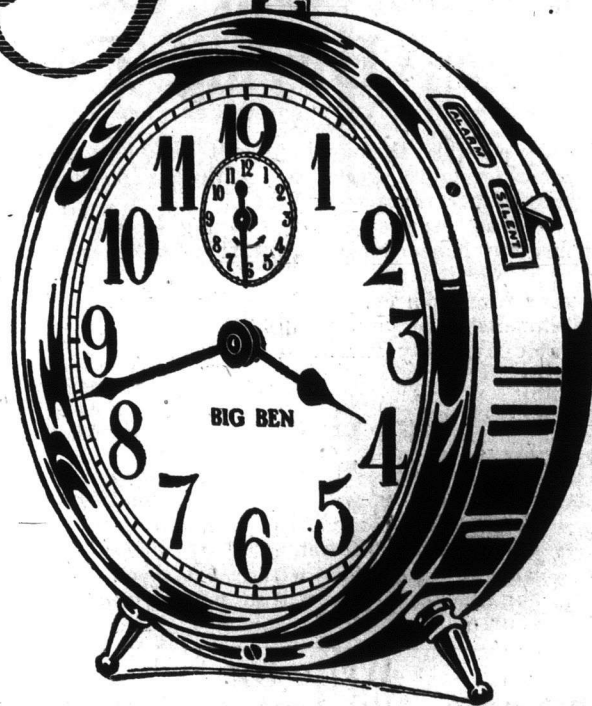
"Oh, it isn't Sunday, is it?" pleaded Martha piteously. "I don't see how it can be. Daniel and me couldn't be mistaken about the Lord's day—we just couldn't."

"Uncle Daniel must be getting mighty forgetful," continued Jane, mercilessly; but at this thrust Martha drew herself up with some show of spirit.

"Daniel's memory's good for a man of his years," she asserted, forgetting that the thought Jane had voiced was in her own mind only that morning. "Besides," she added, loyally, "he ain't done any worse'n me. I churned a roll of butter this morning and did all my Saturday's cleaning and baking."

"Goodness, Aunt Marthy, you'll go to perdition, sure," said Philip, gravely. There was a merry twinkle in his eye

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