

"I've got a mother, but you won't find out anything more until—"

"I don't want to find out anything more. But just think how happy you'd make her—a big smart feller like you—if you'd only do what's right. There's fellers that's got mothers an' ain't fit to be any comfort to 'em, an' they just envy you. an' wish they had your grit and headpiece. They don't take to hoss-stealin'—they hang around, starvin' and hopin', an' gettin' scared to death."

"Have you got any mother?"

"Yes."

"Then you shan't help me out. Go away. Tie the string with the file on it to the gratin'—I won't draw it in till you're safe out of sight."

"I won't do it—you mightn't get safe to the ground, and if you got lamed you might get catched."

"Go away, anyhow—I'd rather run my chance than get you in jail 'cause I got out. I don't mind tellin' you that somebody else is goin' to get me out if you don't. I'n safe—go along, but you might leave the string where I can reach it."

"You won't go back to the old business, even if somebody else lets you out, will you?"

"No—I swear to God I won't."

There was a slight rustle of the garments of the shadow outside the grating; then a small black square shadow appeared beside the larger one outside; it was thrust through the grating, with the words—

"Kiss the book."

The sound of moving lips was heard.

"You might as well keep the book now you've got it," whispered the outer shadow. "I ain't an extra-good reader, an' there's things in it that I don't make out, but they say it's the best thing in the world for men that's tryin' to turn ever a new leaf. Here's the file—remember your mother. I'll sneak up an' help you out when you're ready."

"Steady!" whispered the other shadow. "Give me your hand—count on me for your life. Who are you?—how can I let you know where I get to, and how can you reach me if you ever need money or friends?"

"I'm the feller you gave a hoss to once, an' then saved him from the Regulators."

"Great God!" exclaimed the other shadow. Then it snatched the file and began work, with an energy not justly attributable to shadows.

At the same moment a figure glided away from the inner door of the cell, where it had been crouching during the entire conversation. It passed through the narrow hallway which separated the cell from the jailor's apartments, noiselessly opened the

door, slipped rapidly along the wall, and peered around the corner of the building in time to see Lem crouch behind a barrel near the fence. Then the figure withdrew its head, passed under cover of the jail to the street, went noiselessly and with bare feet through the street, down an alley, and into another alley, on one side of which is the high board fence of the jail.

The scene which here met his eye did not seem to surprise him, but it was nevertheless unusual and peculiar. Fifteen or twenty men—all of them respectable, hard-working citizens, and some of them church-members—were ranged along the fence, peering through cracks and knot-holes, and each man held a pistol of some sort. The new-comer glided along the line, scrutinizing each man, and receiving friendly nods in return. At length he seemed to find the man for whom he was searching, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, exclaimed:

"Major, this thing's got to stop."

"Why, what in thunder's the matter, Sheriff?" whispered the Major, straightening himself up, and pocketing the pistol, while two or three other men approached them and thrust their heads forward.

"I can't easily tell what's up, said the Sheriff. "I wish you'd all heard it for yourself. I've heard enough to make me Bill Hixton's friend. There ain't to be any lynching around here to-night. I'll stop his breaking out, if you say so, but if I do you've got to agree not to break in."

"Can't you tell what the —— you're driving at?" demanded the man upon whose horse Lem was riding a few months before, when he was captured by the Regulators.

The Sheriff seemed to swallow something, not with the greatest success; then he spoke in a low, dogged tone:

"It's just this; that chap that's helpin' him is the poor little cuss that Bill gave your hoss to, and that the rest of the crowd came near hangin', only that Bill was man enough to come in and tell the truth, and get some cold lead for his pains."

"Then the little scoundrel was in with Bill and his gang," said the Major. "That's just the way us fellows let business slip through our fingers when we're excited."

"No, he wasn't," replied the Sheriff. "Bill didn't know who he was to-night till the very last minute. And the way that little cuss preached to him—why, it would have converted the devil, he was so infernally in earnest about it."

"Bill Hixton's worse than the devil," whispered Garman. "Who ever caught the devil prowlin' around an' stealin' honest farmers' hosses?"

"Well, Bill's a man of his word, any