

she loved him beca'se nobody else did. 'Twa'n't a reasonable reason, and her pa and ma couldn't understand what made her holt to it so stubborn. But I knowed. It was the kiss that had been laid upon her like a true-love seal.

"As for Harpeth, he was God-lonesome now for true. He fairly roosted on Liquor Ridge, and he mighty nigh reformed all the other young bucks around here, beca'se they were afeerd to go up there where he was to git their whiskey. They say he had seven wild-cat stills all to himself, and every night we could hear him ragin' from one to the other around the hat-brim of the Valley.

"And when we all thought he'd done as bad as he could, he fetched a surge and done worse than possible. Things had been goin' on the way I'm tellin' you for maybe a month—him cavortin' on Liquor Ridge like he had the devil's own virus in him, and Rosie settin' down here on the do'step grievin' like an orphaned moon-flower—when one Saturday, 'long towards night, Harpeth waked up there in his own house accidentally sober. And he found a paper in his pocket showin' he'd give to Jonathan Snow a mortgage on all his corn and fodder and cowpeas and two kilns of sweet potatoes for ten dollars, and he seen from the date that was the very day it was to be foreclosed. Well, sir, what with drinkin' so much and realizin' it meant ruin to be stripped bare of all he had, I reckon he went crazy and wa'n't responsible for what he done. Next thing come the sound of shootin' and yellin' from towards Harpeth's house. Folks jerked open their do's and run out to see what was the trouble. Every man and woman in the Valley come flyin' along Brasstown road the next minute, for there set Harpeth hill beneath a crown of fire, the house, barn, fodder-stacks all in a blaze. But we didn't git further than to the foot of it before we see Harpeth himself standin' at the top with a pistol in each hand, spittin' buckshot at us and yellin' like a demon. Somebody give a groan, and we dropped back out of range, drawed together in a bunch, and we was too astonished and skeert to speak, much less to dar' that burnin' hill with that burnin' soul standin' guard over it. I recollect it was in March. The snow had been fallin' all day, and every once in a while the wind would whirl a sheet of it around the red sight above us, and Harpeth he showed through it like a terrible black shadow. Presently one of the Stallin's boys 'lowed, says he:

"If that fool up there takes a notion to step for'ards a dozen yards he'll plug some of us sho'!"

"Lord, sir, did you ever see a passel of steers stampede? It was like that. We fair split the wind gittin' away from there—old man Snow leadin' the race, with his long white beard behind him like the turned-down horns of an old bell-wether.

"But what we'd seen wa'n't no laughin' matter. I set here in my jouse thinkin' after I got home, beca'se I couldn't sleep. And I reckon I'd been studyin' over the doctrine of predestination, whether man or his Maker is the arthur of it, till nigh midnight, when I jumped clean out of the cheer to hear a knock at my do' and the sound of somebody singin' outside. I recognized Harpeth's voice, and I come mighty nigh flingin' a fit, I was so skeert. Then I riz and opened the do', and you could have knocked me down with a feather when I seen Rosie Mayberry standin' by him.

"She looked up at me out of the snow that was whirlin' around her as if she was mortally afeerd, and she says, ketchin' her breath in sobs:

"Pappy, Pappy, I heard him singin' his heaven song, and I knowed he'd freeze to death out there in the storm, and I went out to git him, beca'se I couldn't b'ar it and beca'se I'm sorry fur him!"

"I ketched holt of both of 'em and drawed 'em inside and shet the do'. Harpeth was still singin', with that rapt fool look on his face he always had when he 'lowed he was the angel Gabriel.

"You done right," I says, guidin' him to my cheer by the fire and fixin' to thaw him out; but she helt back, and directly she says:

"Pappy, you won't let 'em know I brung him here, will you?"

"No, honey, I won't tell," I says. 'You come on now and git warm yourself.' But she was like a little white ghost of love,

and tenderness pasted ag'in' my do'-jamb with the snow layin' over her like a bridal veil. And I understood she didn't want him to see her.

"Then it happened. Rosie Mayberry come mincin' down the road with her Bible and hymn-book under her arm, and her face set with the fair Sabbath seal that sech virgins wear. She hadn't heard a sound of what had been goin' on. But now her eyes fell on Harpeth drenched to the skin, his shirt open, bar-footed, and all she seen was his face.

"Oh, John," she cries out, droppin' her books and runnin' to him, 'you air changed'.

"Then we seen it too, as plain as if the Almighty's white dove had lit on him, the change in Harpeth's face.

"I—I—believe I am," he answers very gentle, as if the wonder of it had jested come over him.

"You don't feel so terrible predestined now, do you?" she went on, holdin' to his arms and gazin' up at him with her little head throwed back like a bird's.

"Well, not the way I did," he answers, still as if he was in a trance and was seein' her in a vision. Then she reached up her two hands, put 'em together ag'in behind his neck, and begun to laugh and to cry all at once, her face like a day in April that ain't sho' of itself.

"I sorter cleared my throat to remind 'em that we was still there. And, Mister, that was the first time she knowed it; she had seen nobody but him till that minute. Then she dropped her hands, and turned burnin' red. But he put his arms around her, helt her close, and looked over her head at us as serene as if he'd jested lit from his chariot of fire and didn't need to make excuses.

"I'm cold," quavered old man Snow, settin' up and shakin' the water out of his beard. Harpeth reached down, took his dry coat, wrapped it around his enemy's shoulders, and went back to Rosie.

"If a man take your coat, give him your cloak also," says I to myself. The Scriptures air fulfilled. And so it was. Harpeth was changed beca'se he'd acted up

to the law of Heaven. You can explain everything else, but I'll be danged if you can explain the peace that passeth all understandin' that a man gits, not beca'se he's a Methodist and believes in apostasy, or a Baptist and believes in election, or a Presbyterian and believes in predestination, but beca'se by some miracle of the sperit he acts accordin' to the higher dispensation. And while I don't take much stock in this rarin' damnin' church divinity we hear some preachers tell about, I've never doubted the Power that could change a savage like Harpeth into a man. And that's what happened. From that day he was different, not accordin' to science or theology, but accordin' to them Scriptures which hint for immortal things of the soul. When he jumped into the creek to save the man that helped to ruin him, he jested by accident discovered the law of eternal life, same as a fellow once flung up an apple and discovered the law of gravitation.

"But we didn't figger on sech mysteries that day. We was too happy. When we'd all been up and congratulated Rosie and Harpeth, and somebody had toted old man Snow off, Prim he 'lowed for us to come down to his house to dinner. I put Buck Stallin's on a horse and told him to ride fur the license as if his life was at stake, fur I wa'n't takin' no chances on that weddin'. And so in the afternoon the parson come over and tied the knot, Harpeth standin' up in Prim's own Sunday clothes, beca'se by this time he was so tame he'd have wor eMisses Mayberry's petticoat if anybody had insisted. And there ain't a soberer man nor a happier woman in this Valley today than them two, livin' up there in their new house on Harpeth Hill."

The man arose and gave his seat to a girl.

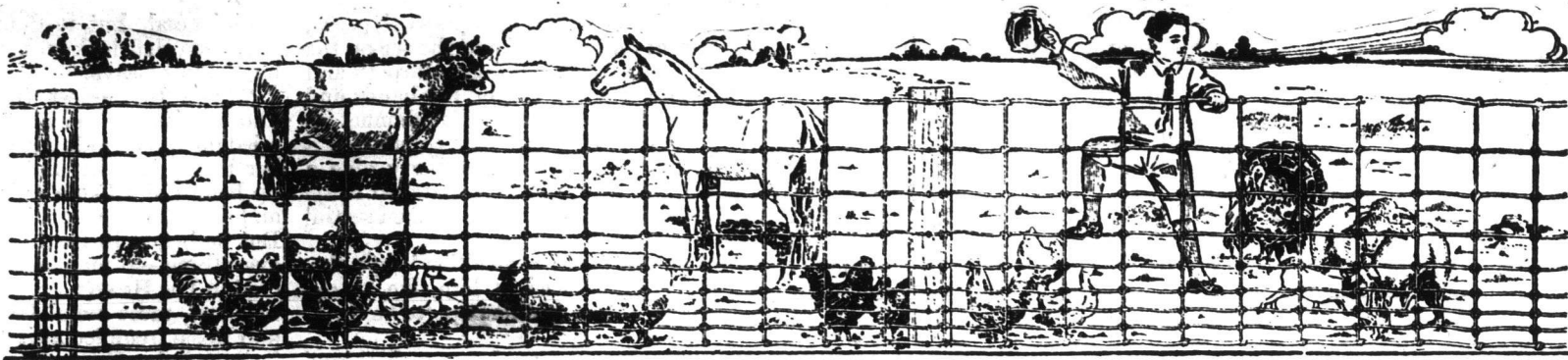
"Oh, thank you most kindly, sir," she replied.

"Don't mind her being polite," exclaimed a sad-faced woman. "I'm taking her to a sanitarium."

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