

CHAPTER II.

SOME LOCAL NEWS AND THE STORY OF A WIND-STORM.

It was a balmy spring evening and the door of the general store was open. From within came the sound of voices, and the occasional peals of laughter told the passerby that Jamsey Pompey and Billy Parker were among the number.

Spring had made its appearance early that season, and the revival of life stirred the countryside to a renewal of the usual preparations. Limpy, too, had received an impetus as he watched the snow slip from the hillside, and caught the odor of the resinous buds and sappy trees. New commodities had been added to his varied stock and ranged in tempting array, from grains and garden seeds to webs of shirting and gingham. Customers called daily and were beamed upon whether they came to shop or just "dropped in," and it was seldom when mail night came round that the over-plus of duties in seed-time or harvest crowded out their visit to the store.

The clock on top of the spool cabinet near the door struck eight before Billy Batterson arrived that evening with the mail from Kinglyville. The budget was unusually heavy, and before the hillsider had received his weekly paper and the few letters which fell to