

It was impossible to take it into the house without revealing his secret, for Betsey Bolton had no small talent in the way of finding out things which she wished to know.

After seeing his horse comfortably stabled, his mind in the mean time in a perfect tempest of anxiety, his eyes suddenly fell on an empty barrel. A bright idea struck him, and in a moment he had placed the gold in the barrel and poured over it a bag of oats.

He was so much pleased with the success of this operation, that he entered the house, his face radiant with smiles, entirely forgetting the sad scene he had just left.

The next morning John started out to find the proper officers and acquaint them with the state of affairs, only omitting that part which related to his own private transactions.

A coroner's inquest was held over the body and a verdict given of death from consumption. The bonds were deposited in the bank till the rightful owner could be found, and steps were taken to obtain if possible some clue to her whereabouts.

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## CHAPTER II.

A month passed away, and in the hurry of Spring work John nearly forgot his anxiety, though he was constantly on the lookout for any opportunity to rid himself of the golden bane of his existence.

One day he had just come in from his work, and was standing by the pump, dousing his head with water. Betsey, her face almost blistered by the fire, and in no very amiable mood, was tapping a white, crispy loaf of bread to see if it was done. "John," said she, "I s'pose you know Peter Jones has been here."

"No?" said he, stopping short.

"Of course not," said Betsey, "and you nowhere to be found, high nor low, and I must leave my bread, all riz up to the wall, and run over the neighborhood for you. If there ever was a woman so pestered, I'm sorry for her."

"Well, wife," said John, "what did he want?"

"Want? why, he wanted them oats you promised him, of course; and I told him to take the first barrel he came to. If I've got men's work to do, I'll do it."

John started as if he had been shot, and was out of the door before his wife had time to catch her breath, knocking over on his way a pan of dough and several articles of furniture. Without hat or coat, swinging a large brown towel in one hand and clutching a piece of soap in the other, he rushed down the street like a madman. The sleeve of his