

you're right. If it's the Lord's will I should stay at home and shoo weasels, I s'pose he can look after you without my help, if he has a mind to. Will you take the sweet potatoes along? There's a bushel and a half; and two dozen eggs."

The two old people loaded the waggon together, rather silently. Nothing further was said about the prayer-meeting. Neither alluded to danger. They spoke of the price of potatoes and chickens. The times were too stern to be spendthrift in emotion. One might be lavish of anything else; but one had to economize in feeling, and be a miser in its expression. When the parson was ready to start he kissed his wife, and said:

"Good-bye, Deborah."

And she said: "Good-bye, Levi."

Then she said: "Let me tuck you up a little. The buffalo ain't in."

She tucked the old robe about the old legs with painstaking, motherly thoroughness, as if he had been a boy going to bed. She said how glad she was she had that nice shawl to line it.

"Thank you, Deborah. Keep the doors locked, won't you? And I wouldn't run out much till I get back."

"No, I don't know 's I will. Have you got your lantern?"

"Yes."

"And your pistol?"

"No."

"Ain't you going to take it?"

"No, Deborah; I've decided not to. Besides, it's a rusty old affair. It wouldn't do much."

"You'll get home by nine, won't you?" she pleaded, lifting her withered cheek over the high, muddy wheel. For a moment those lines of anxiety seemed to grow corrosive, as if they would eat her face out.

"Or quarter-past," said the parson, cheerfully. "But don't worry if I'm not here till half-past."

Hezekiah took occasion to start at this point; he was an experienced horse; he knew when a conversation had lasted long enough.

A rickety, rocky path, about four feet wide, called by courtesy "The Road," wound away from the parsonage. The cornfield grew to it on each side. The tall stalks, some of them ten feet high, stood dead and stark, shivering in the rising wind. The old man drove into them. They closed about his gray head. Only the rear of the muddy blue waggon was visible between the husks.

"Levi! Levi! I want to ask a question."

She could hear the bow-legged wheels come to a lame halt; but she could not see him. He called through the corn in his patient voice:

"Well, well! What is it? Ask away, Deborah."

"What time *shall* I begin to worry, Levi?"

To this feminine enquiry silence answered significantly: