

A SECOND-HAND ANGEL

and I was to come up for trial when called upon. I shall not be called upon so long as I stay good.

I saw the tears in Curly's eyes as she read, and her lips went twisty as if she were due to cry.

"Shorely," she said, "this comes of tellin' our prayers to God. So Jim and me is free to go back to Holy Crawss?"

"You're free."

"Old friend," she whispered, "you must be first to tell Jim. Leave me awhile."

I walked away into the house as if to look for Jim, then crept back behind a curtain watching her. She looked away to the west, and I knew she was longing for the desert. Then she kissed her baby on the nose, and once again, as in the old days, I heard her singing:—

"Whar y'u from, little stranger—little boy?
Y'u was ridin' a cloud on that star-strewn plain,
But y'u fell from the skies like a drop of rain,
To this wo'ld of sorrow and long, long pain—
Will y'u care fo' yo' motheh, lillie boy?"

Far off I could hear the footfall of a horse.

"When y'u grows, little varmint, lillie boy,
Y'u'll be ridin' a hawss at yo' fatheh's side,
With you' gun and yo' spurs and yo' haidstrong pride:
Will y'u think of yo' home when the world rolls wide—
Will y'u wish fo' yo' motheh, lillie boy?"

The horse was coming nearer up the drive.