Betrayed by a Pumpkin

I never see a barrel of apples opened, with the carefully selected "facers" placed stem up in concentric circles just beneath the head, without thinking with somewhat bitter amusement of the two seasons, nearly a score of years ago, when Cousin Henry Reynolds and I worked Grandfather Putnam's farm on shares.

We had been graduated from the Parkerstown High School the preceding June, and while we looked forward to a professional career, both of us were short of money. As so many others have done in similar circumstances, we taught school the first winter, Henry in district No. 11, Springbrook, and I in the adjoining township of Hickory Ridge. He boarded with Deacon Salathiel Putnam, our maternal grandfather.

The old gentleman had leased his farm for a number of years to a man named Moses Lynch, a plausible fellow, but one of questionable honesty. Grandfather had determined to get rid of him, and when he learned how eager Henry and I were to earn money with which to complete our education, he offered us the rental of his farm for two seasons. He agreed to furnish everything—stock, tools, and seed — and we were to do the work for two-fifths of the gross receipts.

All our friends advised us to accept the offer, as the terms were more liberal than those accorded most farm tenants unprovided with an outfit.

The old farm comprised one hundred and five acres, of which not quite one-half was under the plow. There was a large pasture, ten acres of forest, a two-acre sugar-bush of huge hard maple trees, a chestnut grove on the hillside overlooking Spring Brook, from which the township takes its name, and four and a half acres covered with apple and peach orchards.

The soil was a deep clay loam, fertile but hilly, and hard to cultivate. The two orchards were esteemed more valuable than the plowland of ten times their area.

The old orchard consisted of trees my great-grandfather had set out, the seeds having been brought from Connecticut in a packet at the bottom of great-grandmother's handbag. She had carefully sowed them in a little nursery bed, from which the tender apple seedlings had been transplanted far and wide. Half of the original orchards in the county trace their descent from that handbag, which thus became a sort of fairy godmother to what is now the greatest apple-producing region in the state. Of course these seedlings, not being budded, bore natural fruit of no particular value, and most of the apples were unfit for sale.

Five years before we took the farm grandfather had had all except a half dozen of the trees grafted with Greenings, Baldwins, Northern Spys, Pippins and Tompkins County Kings. This new wood was just beginning to bear, and in May the young orchard, with the shorter-lived peach-trees midway between the rows, was covered with a wealth of pinky-white blossoms. We hoped to net at least six hundred dollars from the apples. Soon it was apparent that we should need to have an abundant harvest if we were to receive a suitable reward for our hard labor, for ill luck pursued us almost from the beginning. Perhaps ill luck is hardly the name for our misfortunes, for the hand of a human enemy was plainly apparent in every disaster of which we were the victims.

Early in April the mold-boards, points and land-slides of two of our plows, left in the furrow over night, were found smashed the following morning. The head of an axe or a sledge-hammer had been used upon them. It cost us twelve dollars to replace the broken parts, as we felt morally bound to repair any damage done to grandfather's tools while we were using them.

Eight weeks later two of the best milch-cows in our herd sickened and died, a loss of seventy-five dollars. Arsenic was found in their stomachs, but how administered we could not discover.

We took extraordinary precautions thereafter to house all stock and machinery, and to keep our outbuildings locked at night; but when our wheat was ripe and we drew out the reaper grandfather had bought the year before, we found it practically ruined. Many of the smaller working parts were missing and the driving-chain had been filed nearly in two in several places. So far as we knew, the machine had been under lock and key ever since we took the place. The cost of repairing it would exceed a hundred dollars, and the grain could not wait. Grandfather insisted upon assuming the whole of this loss, while we hired a neighbor to cut our grain.

"Boys," the old gentleman said, his voice trembling and his face twitching with grief and anger, "until this season I did not believe that I had an enemy on earth; at least, not one with such bitter hatred in his heart as this work shows. The thought of that hurts me worse than the financial loss."

"It must be our enemy, sir, not yours," I said, trying to soothe the old man's grief. "Such things never happened to you till we came."

"It's not enmity at all, in the ordinary sense," said Henry, emphatically. "It is a deliberate, malignant injury, done simply to ruin and drive us away. Now who would profit by our being forced to leave the farm?"

"Why, no one; no one at all, my boy."

"Yes, perhaps; but who thinks he might be the gainer by our going away?"

"Why — why," said grandfather, deeply pained and obviously hesitating, "I know of no one, unless it might be Mo—" He stopped short and shook his head.

"Unless it might be Mose Lynch," said Henry, bluntly, completing the sentence. "He's over on the old Spencer farm across the brook, where the picking is mighty slim compared with what he had here, especially as Uncle Hiram watches him as a cat would a mouse."

"It doesn't seem possible; indeed, it does not!" said grandfather, under his breath, walking slowly away with bowed head. He would not accuse another without proof, even in thought.

"Really, Henry, it is hard to believe," I remarked, "especially as we never have laid a straw in his way, and grandfather has befriended him a score of times."

"Who is it, if he isn't the man?" my cousin demanded. "Don't you remember how he delayed leaving the place, and hindered our spring's work by cluttering up the barns as long as he could? That was pure malice, for all his soft, oily words and his smoothing his whiskers between words. I tell you, Sack, he's a scoundrel, and if we don't trip him up somehow, he'll make a good deal more trouble for us."

"But grandfather wouldn't take him back upon any conditions; he'd let the farm stand idle first."

"That's all very true, but Lynch doesn't know it. Grandfather is so careful not to hurt people's feelings that he never has told the man frankly what he thinks of him. I'll guarantee Mose feels sure he could come back if we were out of the way, and that the only reason he was forced to leave was because we wanted to work the farm."

We said nothing of our losses, except to Mr. Stone, grandfather's lawyer, who advised us to keep our mouths shut and our eyes and ears open, for, as he explained, we were helpless without positive legal proof.

Our amateur detective work resulted in nothing except to make us so alert and cautious that possibly we prevented other attempts. At all events, we were undisturbed for several months, until we had grown comparatively careless again.

Our yield of grain was below the average, and the drought also reduced our receipts from milk delivered at the cheese factory; but the Putnam orchards were heavily laden for an off year, when many of our neighbors had not enough apples for their own use. The quality of the fruit also was excellent, and the price promised to be high.

Instead of two hundred barrels of apples, as we had estimated, we found late in October, when the last tree had been picked, that we had four hundred and twenty-eight barrels. These we packed with great care. We rejected all inferior fruit, and sold it at a neighboring evaporator for sixty cents a hundred pounds.

While we were at work grandfather's old friend and fellow deacon, Morris Howe, one of the Springbrook produce dealers, drove to the farm, saw us put up a few barrels, and bought the entire crop for three dollars and sixty-two and one-half cents a barrel, delivered at his warehouse. We had made a good sale, but we felt the apples were worth the price offered.

The following week we were compelled to go to Arden to attend the annual teachers' institute, as both Henry and I had secured schools for the coming winter. Grandfather promised to keep a sharp eye on the barreled apples, which were piled under the trees where they had been packed.

Upon our return we found their number undiminished, and as soon as possible we drew them to the warehouse in Springbrook village. When I arrived with the last load I found Mr. Howe talking with Moses Lynch, who was delivering his apples at the same time.

With a wholly gratuitous show of virtue Moses removed the head from one of his barrels and very ostentatiously emptied its contents on the floor. The apples were Baldwins of large size and well colored.

"They's not many care ter do that, Mr. Howe," he drawled, with a self-satisfied air. "They don't cal'late on showin' what's in th' middle, but I put 'em up all alike clean through."

"Oh, I fancy all honest men do the same, Mr. Lynch," said the dealer, pleasantly.

"Oh, yas, yas, hones' men do; but they're kinder skase, kinder skase, Mr. Howe."

"I haven't found it so," was the reply. "Here's Jack Morton, for instance—Deacon Putnam's grandson. I saw him packing apples last month and I'm sure he wouldn't be afraid to dump them anywhere."

"That I would not, Mr. Howe," I said eagerly, for I was nettled at what I thought was a hidden taunt in Lynch's remarks. "Here is a barrel of Long Island Greenings; let us see if they won't match Mr. Lynch's Baldwin's."

Hastily driving up the hoops till I could pry out the head, I disclosed the golden-green beauties beneath it, and then poured them out upon the floor. As I tossed the empty barrel to one side my eyes fell upon an object that completely unnerved me for an instant. From the center of the barrel had rolled a twenty-pound pumpkin, surrounded by about a peck of the gnarliest, smallest cider-apples I ever saw.

"Wal, wal!" Moses drawled, smiling queerly. "Picked th' wrong bar'l, didn't ye, young feller? But I'm intrudin'; this ain't none o' my business," and with the last word the man lounged out of the building, still smiling.

My first impulse was to spring after him, shouting accusations and threats, for I was convinced that he was the author of this fresh misfortune, more galling and unbearable than all that had gone before; but the shame of my false position held me back till he had disappeared, and afterward I was glad that I had kept silent.

"What does this mean, Jack?" Mr. Howe asked, in a kindly tone.

In reply I told him all that had occurred, stating my belief that Moses Lynch had in some manner contrived to place the pumpkin and worthless apples in the barrel during our absence at the institute. To my great relief, the dealer showed plainly that he believed me. He advised extreme caution in speaking of the matter till we were in possession of some tangible evidence, which he said he felt sure would be obtained sooner or later. It was arranged that we should reassort all our apples at his warehouse, a locked room being set apart for the purpose.

Henry was almost speechless with rage and shame, and grandfather was greatly disturbed when I told him the miserable story that night. Both feared Lynch would spread it broadcast, but I suspected that he meant instead to hold it as a club over our heads.

It took us several days to inspect the barrels, although in the end we found only twenty-four had been tampered with. From them we took an equal number of pumpkins and between four and five bushels of cider-apples. The net loss to us was seven barrels, besides our time and labor.

We piled the pumpkins in a corner and placed the rejected apples in sacks. Just as we were finishing our unpleasant task Henry happened to glance at the heap of pumpkins, upon which a strong light fell from an adjacent window. With a muttered exclamation he hastily crossed the room and picked one up.

"What does this mean, Jack?" he asked, excitedly. "See! 'T.—E.—L.'"

Dimly outlined on the surface of the vegetable were the three letters. They were between green and brown in color, and were seamed with tiny wrinkles, while all about them the skin was smooth and yellow.

"That's a Hallowe'en pumpkin," I said, after a moment's thought. "Some child has pasted his initials cut from paper on the upper side while it was still green. And say, Henry, 'L.' stands for Lynch!"

"And 'T. E.' for 'Thomas Ellsworth,' eh, Jack? We must let Mr. Howe see this at once." Thomas Lynch was Moses' only son, a lad about eleven years of age, who had been one of Henry's pupils during the preceding winter.

The practice of marking apples and pumpkins in this way is a very common one. The space covered by the pasted paper of course did not take the ripened color of the rest of the fruit, and the initials or other design would stand out very prominently when the paper was removed. Our Hallowe'en Jack-o'-lanterns were almost always marked in this way.

We talked the matter over with Mr. Howe, and afterward waited in his office, for Lynch then was delivering oats at the warehouse. His team soon arrived, and to our joy Thomas was the driver and had come alone.

"Ever see this before, Tommie?" Mr. Howe asked, calling him inside and pointing at the pumpkin.

"Why, cracky, yes!" the boy exclaimed, grinning broadly. "I lettered that down in pa's back corn-field. He said he must 'a' fed it to the cows by mistake. How'd it git up here?"

We evaded his question, and carried the telltale pumpkin in triumph to our lawyer. Not much more remains to be told.

Within a week Mr. Stone found a man who had seen Lynch at work in the back part of our orchard on the Sunday afternoon following our departure for the institute. As he knew grandfather well, he had wondered that Deacon Putnam should permit labor on the Sabbath, but had said nothing about it till the lawyer questioned him.

In company with this man, and with our proof well in hand, we called on the vindictive fellow. Mr. Stone had advised us to collect just what his evil work had cost us, and to make a further condition that he leave the country at once, or we would prosecute.

"You probably could get heavier damages in money alone," the lawyer said, "but you and your property never would be safe if he were near."

We followed his advice, and after a stormy interview, in which Lynch dropped his mask of smooth benevolence, we forced the rascal to come to our terms. He paid us two hundred and fifty dollars, and within a month left for the west, where he still lives for aught we know. — Youth's Companion.

Jack—And what answer did you get?

Reggie—Well, she said she had not as yet questioned her heart. I must wait.

Jack—And what did you say to that?

Reggie—I haven't the least idea. But, say, I'd be awfully glad if you would be my best man. — Brooklyn Life.

The cook—"Oi'm sorry, mum, but the walkin' diligate av th' Suprame Ordher av Cooks hov ordhered me t' throw up me job." Mrs. Subbub (tearfully)—Oh, Norah! What have I done?" The cook—"Nawthin', mum; but yer foolish husbind got shaved in a nonunion barber shop th' day before yisterday." — Brooklyn Life.

..WHITE PASS AND YUKON ROUTE..

Time Table of Rail Division.

North Bound 1st Class No. 1 Daily Except Sunday	STATIONS	South Bound 1st Class No. 2 Daily Except Sunday
Lv. *9:00 a. m.	SKAGWAY	Ar. 4:00 p. m.
9:05	Shops	3:58
9:15	Boulder	3:42
9:35	Clifton	3:25
10:00	Glacier	3:05
10:10	Tunnel	2:52
10:19	Switchback	2:40
10:25	WHITE PASS	2:35
10:30		2:30
10:50	Medows	2:10
11:00	Frazer	2:00
11:15	Log Cabin	1:40
11:45	†BENNETT	1:05
12:05 p. m.		12:45
12:25	Pavey	12:25
12:45	Pennington	12:08 p. m.
1:05	Dundalk	11:58
1:15	Watson	11:45
1:40	CARIBOU	11:20
2:03	Lansdowne	10:57
2:16	Lorne	10:44
2:24	Minto	10:36
2:31	DeWette	10:29
2:45	Robinson	10:14
3:04	Cowley	9:55
3:20	Dugdale	9:39
3:35	Wigan	9:25
Ar. 4:00 p. m	WHITEH'RSE	Lv. 9:00 a. m

*Alaska Time—1 hr. slower than Pacific time.
†Meal Station.

A. B. NEWELL, General Mgr. J. F. LEE, Traffic Mgr

Pacific Coast Steamship Co.

Affords a Complete Coastwise service, Covering

Alaska, Washington California, Oregon and Mexico.

Our boats are manned by the most skillful navigators. Exceptional Service the Rule.

All Steamers Carry Both Freight and Passengers

AMUSEMENTS

AUDITORIUM

Last Week of Bittner Co.

"WAGES OF SIN"

Prices as Usual.

Orpheum Theatre

ALEC PANTAGES, Manager.

Week Starting Monday Night May 19

Grand International Minstrel First Part

MAY 24th—WRESTLING MATCH KRELLING vs. BAGGARLY

Popular Prices. General Entrance Through Reception

Alaska Steamship Co.

..Operating the Steamers..

"Dolphin"-"Farallon"-"Dirigo"

For All Points in Southeastern Alaska

Connecting with the White Pass & Yukon Railway for Dawson and interior Yukon points.

....General Offices....

201 Pioneer Building Seattle, Wash.

The Northwestern Line

Is the Short Line to Chicago And All Eastern Points

All through trains from the North Pacific Coast connect with this line in the Union Depot at St. Paul.

Travelers from the North are invited to communicate with

F. W. Parker, Gen'l Agent, Seattle, Wn.

Japan American Line

Carrying U. S. Mails to Oriental Points.

Steamer Every 2 Weeks

For Japan, China and All Asiatic Points.

Ticket Office - 612 First Avenue, Seattle

Pacific Packing and Navigation Co.

Successors to Pacific Steam Whaling Co.

FOR

Copper River and Cook's Inlet

YAKUTAT, ORCA, VALDEZ, HOMER.

FOR ALL POINTS in Western Alaska Steamer Newport Sails From Juneau on First of Each Month

OFFICES SEATTLE Cor. First Ave. and Yesler Way. SAN FRANCISCO No. 30 California Street