

life and about his elder brother, who had been rather good to him after their mother died, when Dick was quite a little fellow. Their father had died some time before. The brother's name was Ben, and he had taken care of Dick as well as he could, until the boy was old enough to sell newspapers and run errands. They had lived together, and as he grew older Ben had managed to get along until he had quite a decent place in a store.

"And then," exclaimed Dick with disgust, "blest if he didn't go and marry a gal! Just went and got spoony an' hadn't any more sense left! Married her, an' set up housekeepin' in two back rooms. An' a hefty un she was,—a regular tiger-cat. She'd tear things to pieces when she got mad,—and she was mad *all* the time. Had a baby just like her,—yell day 'n' night! An' if I didn't have to 'tend it! an' when it screamed, she'd fire things at me. She fired a plate at me one day, an' hit the baby—cut its chin. Doctor said he'd carry the mark till he died. A nice mother she was! Crackey! but didn't we have a time—Ben 'n' mehsel' 'n' the young un. She was mad at Ben because he didn't make money faster; 'n' at last he went out West with a man to set up a cattle ranch. An' hadn't been gone a week 'fore one night, I got home from sellin' my papers, 'n' the rooms was locked up 'n' empty, 'n' the woman o' the house, she told me Minna'd gone—shown a clean pair o' heels. Some un else said she' gone across the water to be nuss to a lady as had a little baby, too. Never heard a word of her since—nuther has Ben. If I'd ha' bin him, I wouldn't ha' fretted a bit—'n' I guess he didn't. But he thought a heap o' her at the start. Tell you, he was spoons on her. She was a daisy-lookin' gal, too, when she was dressed up 'n' not mad. She'd big black eyes 'n' black hair down to her knees; she'd make it into a rope as big as your arm, and twist it 'round 'n' 'round her head; 'n' I tell you her eyes'd snap! Folks used to say she was part *Itali-un*—said her mother or father'd come from there, 'n' it made her queer. I tell ye, she was one of 'em—she was!"

He often told Mr. Hobbs stories of her and of his brother Ben, who, since his going out West, had written once or twice to Dick. Ben's luck had not been good, and he had wandered from place to place; but at last he had settled on a ranch in California, where he was at work at the time when Dick became acquainted with Mr. Hobbs.

"That gal," said Dick one day, "she took all the grit out o' him. I couldn't help feelin' sorry for him sometimes."