

head, he knocked the dead ashes out against the beast's shoulder, and pocketed the pipe, while he surveyed the traveller and his horse with an eager curiosity, which, if vulgar, was but natural to persons reared in the lonely surroundings of pioneer life in the backwoods settlements. He was a short, thickset man, with a full beard, and was a fair type of the lower class of his day and environment. But just then he was mine host of the only inn to be found in all that lonely territory—and he played his part accordingly.

"I want a meal and some food for my horse," said the young soldier, as he turned toward the door.

"You can have both," answered the other, "but our fare is only for poor folks. Since this war has threatened we have,"—he was going on in a long apology, but the traveller stopped him.

"Give me what you have," he said shortly and sternly, "only provide my horse with your best, and have a care, for he is inclined to be restless."

"I guessed as much, sir," and he examined the animal with the hand of an hostler. "You will have come far?" he added, with a slight tone of interrogation. As he spoke, the other man, who had also been examining the rider and horse with a curious gaze, came forward. He was of a lank figure, with a long, crafty face and a furtive eye, in which lurked a low cunning, cloaked in an appearance of sly humor.

It was with an obsequious manner, which thinly veiled a coarse satire, that he addressed the young soldier. "A fine bit of horseflesh that, I reckon; none its equal this side of the States."