

enough to live upon, never had to cut her own fire-wood after Lem's recovery, as in previous days the villagers had allowed her to do. The little boy's heart Lem had won by teaching him to make spring-traps for birds, and the grateful little fellow had tried to repay Lem by teaching him Sunday-school hymns and giving him a glass marble. The friendly service of whiskey Lem could gain only by an outlay of money, but the expense was small as compared with the receipts.

But there were times when the companionship of neither of these friends sufficed—times when the thought of all he should do, but could not do, drove him nearly to madness. People who were out of doors at night occasionally met a spare, bent figure, who, when it thought itself unobserved, would make strange gestures and give forth inarticulate sounds. If the moon were shining, they would see a face almost frightful in its eagerness. From behind the fringe of faces which surrounded the departing congregations on Sunday, the same countenance was often seen, until some of the more fastidious worshippers were heard to wish that that dreadful-looking fellow would leave the town. He haunted the doorways of churches, school-houses and the court-house, whenever any entertainment was given at either of them, and scrutinized the ground closely, as if hoping to see some one drop loose change near the door. At one time he gathered pecan-nuts, which had some commercial value, and sold them until he amassed several dollars, all of which money he parted with for the sake of consulting a fortune-teller, but without receiving any tangible return.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW EXPERIENCE.

As Lem crept about the streets one cold, dark night, looking downward and straight ahead as is the habit with the weaker beasts of prey, he suddenly heard, in spite of closed doors and windows, a mighty shout of song go up from the little Methodist church, where one of the daily evening services of a series known as "protracted meetings" was going on. There was something so assertive about the music—all vocal—that Lem unconsciously stopped and listened, and as the refrain again burst forth he caught the words:

O, we'll land on the shore,
O, we'll land on the shore,
O, we'll land on the shore,
And we'll shout for ever more.

Such a rousing chorus Lem had never heard before. He approached the door, peered

through the key-hole, lifted the latch as noiselessly as possible, and slipped into a back seat.

The scene Lem beheld speedily caused him to forget his troubles. The small, plain room, well lit by tallow candles, was full of men and women, mostly members of the church. The sermon had ended, and in response to an exhortation, several persons had knelt at wooden benches inside the altar-rail. Some of these were crying, and over all of them bent various members of the church, praying, instructing, and exhorting. Among the remaining members hymns and prayers had followed each other in rapid succession, a short and earnest exhortation from the pastor occasionally varying the order of exercises. At each response to the pastor's invitation to mourners to come forward, the enthusiasm of the congregation had increased, the prayers had become more fervid, and the songs more spirited.

Lem looked about him in amazement. Could these really be the quiet, hard-working, rather depressed people he met about town every day? There was one man standing in the aisle with the face and air of a martial leader;—could that really be Asa Ringfelter, who usually shuffled about with apparently only the single idea of dodging Squire Barkum, to whom he owed more money than he could pay? And there, on the altar steps, stood a man who had on a suit of clothes which Lem had last seen on his late host, Ben Ringsell; but the face—surely that supremely happy expression could not be developed from the doleful features which Ben had sufficient excuse to habitually carry. In an "amen" seat sat an old half-breed, who was undoubtedly the person always known at Mount Zion as "old Daddy Perks," and who had all the stolidity of his Indian parent; yet now he was crying with joy and shouting "Glory to God!" in tones heard easily above the loudest bursts of song. Old Auntie Bates, Lem had always believed was an angel: but now, in spite of her wrinkles and straggling hairs and unutterably hideous bonnet, she looked like one. What could it all mean?

Every one but the few unbelievers knelt when the pastor called on Brother Brown to pray, and as the prayer, rugged in its structure but almost terrible in its earnestness, proceeded, the unbelievers themselves looked solemn; one of them attempted to create a diversion by throwing a cockle-burr upon the bald pate of a kneeling person, but the smiles excited were few and sickly. When the prayer ended, good farmer Hake raised the following hymn, preceded by its chorus: