

two o'clock I come up Means's hill, and didn't I see Pete Jones, and them others that robbed the Dutchman, and somebody, I dunno who, a-crossin' the blue-grass paster *towards* Jones's?" (Ralph shivered.) "Don't shake your finger at me, old woman. Tongue is all I've got to fight with now; but I'll fight them thieves till the sea goes dry, I will. Shocky, gim me a splint."

"But you wasn't selfish when you tuck me." Shocky stuck to his point most positively.

"Yes, I was, you little tow-headed fool! I didn't take you kase I was good, not a bit of it. I hated Bill Jones what keeps the poor-house, and I knowed him and Pete would get you bound to some of their click, and I didn't want no more thieves raised; so when your mother hobbled, with you a-leadin' her, poor blind thing! all the way over here on that winter night, and said, 'Mr. Pearson, you're all the friend I've got, and I want you to save my boy,' why, you see I was selfish as ever I could be in takin' of you. Your mother's cryin' sot me a-cryin' too. We're all selfish in everything, akordin' to my tell. Blamed ef we ha'n't, Miss Hawkins, only sometimes I'd think you was real benev'lent ef I didn't know we war all selfish."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HARDSHELL PREACHER.

"THEY'S preachin' down to Bethel Meetin'-house to-day," said the Squire at breakfast. Twenty years in the West could not cure Squire Hawkins of saying "to" for "at." "I rather guess as how the old man Bosaw will give pertickeler fits to our folks to-day." For Squire Hawkins, having been expelled from the "Hardshell" church of which Mr. Bosaw was pastor, for the grave offense of joining a temperance society, had become a member of the "Reformers," the very respectable people who now call themselves "Disciples," but whom the profane will persist in calling "Campbellites." They had a church in the village of Clifty, three miles away.

I know that explanations are always abominable to story readers, as they are to story writers, but as so many of my readers have never had the inestimable privilege of sitting under the gospel as it is ministered in enlightened neighborhoods like Flat Creek, I find myself under the necessity—need-cesity the Rev. Mr. Bosaw would call it—of rising to



explain. Some people think the "Hardshells" a myth, and some sensitive Baptist people at the East resent all allusion to them. But the "Hardshell Baptists," or, as they are otherwise called, the "Whisky Baptists," and the "Forty-gallon Baptists," exist in all the old Western and South-western States. They call themselves "Anti-means Baptists" from their Antinomian tenets. Their confession of faith is a caricature of Calvinism, and is expressed by their preachers about as follows: "Ef you're elected, you'll be saved; ef you a'n't, you'll be damned. God'll take keer of his elect. It's a sin to run Sunday-schools, or temp'rince s'cieties, or to send missionaries. You let God's business alone. What is to be will be, and you can't hender it." This writer has attended a Sunday-school, the superintendent of which was solemnly arraigned and expelled from the Hardshell Church for "meddling with God's business" by holding a Sunday-school. Of course the Hardshells are prodigiously illiterate, and often vicious. Some of their preachers are notorious drunkards. They sing their sermons out sometimes for three hours at a stretch.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Even the Anti-means Baptists have suffered from the dire spirit of the age. They are to-day a very respectable body of people calling themselves "Primitive Baptists." Perhaps the description in the text never applied to the whole denomination, but only to the Hardshells of certain localities. Some of these intensely conservative

Ralph found that he was to ride the "clay-bank mare," the only one of the horses that would "carry double," and that consequently he would have to take Miss Hawkins behind him. If it had been Hannah instead, Ralph might not have objected to this "young Lochinvar" mode of riding with a lady on "the croup," but Martha Hawkins was another affair. He had only this consolation; his keeping the company of Miss Hawkins might serve to disarm the resentment of Bud. At all events, he had no choice. What designs the Squire had in this arrangement he could not tell; but the clay-bank mare carried him to meeting on that December morning, with

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churches, I have reason to believe, were always composed of reputable people. But what is said above is not in the least exaggerated as a description of many of the churches in Indiana and Illinois. Their opposition to the temperance reformation was both theoretical and practical. A rather able minister of the denomination whom I knew as a boy used to lie in besotted drunkenness by the roadside. I am sorry to confess that he once represented the county in the State legislature. The piece of a sermon given in this chapter was heard near Cairo, Illinois, in the days before the war. Most of the preachers were illiterate farmers. I have heard one of them hold forth two hours at a stretch. But even in that day there were men among the Hardshells whose ability and character commanded respect. This was true, especially in Kentucky, where able men like the two Dudleys held to the Antinomian wing of their denomination. But the Hardshells are perceptibly less hard than they were. You may march at the rear of the column among Hunkers and Hardshells if you will, but you are obliged to march. Those who will not go voluntarily, the time-spirit, walking behind, prods onward with a goad.



Martha Hawkins behind. And as Miss Hawkins was not used to this mode of locomotion, she was in a state of delightful fright every time the horse sank to the knees in the soft, yellow Flat Creek clay.

"We don't go to church so at the East," she said. "The mud isn't so deep at the East. When I was to Bosting——" but Ralph never heard what happened when she was to Bosting, for just as she said Bosting the mare put her foot into a deep hole molded by the foot of the Squire's horse, and already full of muddy water.

As the mare's foot went twelve inches down into this track, the muddy water spurted higher than Miss Hawkins's head, and mottled her dress with golden spots of clay. She gave a little shriek, and declared that she had never "seen it so at the East."

The journey seemed a little long to Ralph, who found that the subjects upon which he and Miss Hawkins could converse were few; but Miss Martha was determined to keep things going, and once, when the conversation had died out entirely, she made a desperate effort to renew it by remarking, as they met a man on horseback, "That horse switches his tail just as they do at the East. When I was to Bosting I saw horses switch their tails just that way."

What surprised Ralph was to see that Flat Creek

went to meeting. Everybody was there—the Meanses, the Joneses, the Bantas, and all the rest. Everybody on Flat Creek seemed to be there, except the old wooden-legged basket-maker. His family was represented by Shocky, who had come, doubtless, to get a glimpse of Hannah, not to hear Mr. Bosaw preach. In fact, few were thinking of the religious service. They went to church as a common resort to hear the news, and to find out what was the current sensation.

On this particular morning there seemed to be some unusual excitement. Ralph perceived it as he rode up. An excited crowd, even though it be at a church-door on Sunday morning, can not conceal its agitation. Ralph deposited Miss Hawkins on the stile, and then got down himself, and paid her the closest attention to the door. This attention was for Bud's benefit. But Bud only stood with his hands in his pockets, scowling worse than ever. Ralph did not go in at the door. It was not the Flat Creek custom. The men gossiped outside, while the women chatted within. Whatever may have been the cause of the excitement, Ralph could not get at it. When he entered a little knot of people they became embarrassed, the group dissolved, and its component parts joined other companies. What had the current of conversation to



do with him? He overheard Pete Jones saying that the blamed old wooden leg was in it anyhow. He'd been seen goin' home at two in the mornin'. And he could name somebody else ef he choosed. But it was best to clean out one at a time. And just then there was a murmur: "Meetin's took up." And the masculine element filled the empty half of the "hewed-log" church.

When Ralph saw Hannah looking utterly dejected, his heart smote him, and the great struggle set in again. Had it not been for the thought of the other battle, and the comforting presence of the Helper, I fear Bud's interests would have fared badly. But Ralph, with the spirit of a martyr, resolved to wait until he knew what the result of Bud's suit should be, and whether, indeed, the young Goliath had prior claims, as he evidently thought he had. He turned hopefully to the sermon, determined to pick up any crumbs of comfort that might fall from Mr. Bosaw's meager table.

In reporting a single specimen passage of Mr. Bosaw's sermon, I shall not take the liberty which Thucydides and other ancient historians did, of making the sermon and putting it into the hero's mouth, but shall give that which can be vouched for.

"You see, my respective hearers," he began—but

alas! I can never picture to you the rich red nose, the see sawing gestures, the nasal resonance, the snuffle, the melancholy minor key, and all that. "My respective hearers-ah, you see-ah as how-ah as my tex'-ah says that the ox-ah knoweth his owner-ah, and-ah the ass-ah his master's crib-ah. A-h-h! Now, my respective hearers-ah, they're a mighty sight of resemblance-ah atwext men-ah and oxen-ah" [Ralph could not help reflecting that there was a mighty sight of resemblance between some men and asses. But the preacher did not see this analogy. It lay too close to him], "bekase-ah, you see, men-ah is mighty like oxen-ah. Fer they's a tremengious deference-ah atwixt defferent oxen-ah, jest as thar is atwext defferent men-ah; fer the ox knoweth-ah his owner-ah, and the ass-ah, his master's crib-ah. Now, my respective hearers-ah" [the preacher's voice here grew mellow, and the succeeding sentences were in the most pathetic and lugubrious tones], "you all know-ah that your humble speaker-ah has got-ah jest the best yoke of steers-ah in this township-ah." [Here Betsey Short shook the floor with a suppressed titter.] "They a'n't no sech steers as them air two of mine-ah in this whole kedentry-ah. Them crack oxen over at Clifty-ah ha'n't a patchin' to mine-ah. Fer the ox knoweth his owner-ah, and the ass-ah his master's crib-ah.



"Now, my respective hearers-ah, they's a right smart sight of defference-ah atwext them air two oxen-ah, jest like they is atwext defferent men-ah. Fer-ah" [here the speaker grew earnest, and sawed the air, from this to the close, in a most frightful way], "fer-ah, you see-ah, when I go out-ah in the mornin'-ah to yoke-ah up-ah them air steers-ah, and I says-ah, "Wo, Berry-ah! Wo, *Berry-ah!* WO, BERRY-AH', why Berry-ah jest stands stock still-ah and don't hardly breathe-ah while I put on the yoke-ah, and put in the bow-ah, and put in the key-ah, fer, my brethering-ah and sistering-ah, the ox knoweth his owner-ah, and the ass-ah his master's crib-ah. Hal-le-lu-ger-ah!

"But-ah, my hearers-ah, but-ah when I stand at t'other eend of the yoke-ah, and say, 'Come, Buck-ah! *Come, Buck-ah!* COME, BUCK-AH! COME, BUCK-AH!' why what do you think-ah? Buck-ah, that ornery ole Buck-ah, 'stid of comin' right along-ah and puttin' his neck under-ah, acts jest like some men-ah what is fools-ah. Buck-ah jest kinder sorter stands off-ah, and kinder sorter puts his head down-ah this 'ere way-ah, and kinder looks mad-ah, and says, *Boo-oo-oo-oo-ah!*"

Alas! Hartsook found no spiritual edification there, and he was in no mood to be amused. And so, while the sermon drew on through two dreary

hours, he forgot the preacher in noticing a bright green lizard which, having taken up its winter quarters behind the tin candlestick that hung just back of the preacher's head, had been deceived by the genial warmth coming from the great box-stove, and now ran out two or three feet from his shelter, looking down upon the red-nosed preacher in a most confidential and amusing manner. Sometimes he would retreat behind the candlestick, which was not twelve inches from the preacher's head, and then rush out again. At each reappearance Betsey Short would stuff her handkerchief into her mouth and shake in a most distressing way. Shocky wondered what the lizard was winking at the preacher about. And Miss Martha thought that it reminded her of a lizard that she see at the East, the time she was to Bosting, in a jar of alcohol in the Natural History Rooms. The Squire was not disappointed in his anticipation that Mr. Bosaw would attack his denomination with some fury. In fact, the old preacher outdid himself in his violent indignation at "these people that follow Campbell-ah, that thinks-ah that obejience-ah will save 'em-ah and that belongs-ah to temp'rince societies-ah and Sunday-schools-ah, and them air things-ah, that's not ortherized in the Bible-ah, but comes of the devil-ah, and takes folks as belongs to 'em to hell-ah."



As they came out the door Ralph rallied enough to remark: "He did attack your people, Squire."

"Oh, yes," said the Squire. "Didn't you see the Sarpent inspirin' him?"

But the long, long hours were ended and Ralph got on the clay-bank mare and rode up alongside the stile whence Miss Martha mounted. And as he went away with a heavy heart, he overheard Pete Jones call out to somebody:

"We'll tend to his case a Christmas." Christmas was two days off.

And Miss Martha remarked with much trepidation that poor Pearson would have to leave. She'd always been afraid that would be the end of it. It reminded her of something she heard at the East the time she was down to Bosting.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A STRUGGLE FOR THE MASTERY.

THE school had closed on Monday evening as usual. The boys had been talking in knots all day. Nothing but the bulldog in the slender, resolute young master had kept down the rising storm. A teacher who has lost moral support at home, can not long govern a school. Ralph had effectually lost his popularity in the district, and the worst of it was that he could not divine from just what quarter the ill wind came, except that he felt sure of Small's agency in it somewhere. Even Hannah had slighted him, when he called at Means's on Monday morning to draw the pittance of pay that was due him.

He had expected a petition for a holiday on Christmas day. Such holidays are deducted from the teacher's time, and it is customary for the boys to "turn out" the teacher who refuses to grant them, by barring him out of the school-house on Christmas and New Year's morning. Ralph had intended to grant a holiday if it should be asked, but it was