

Pete picked himself up slowly, and, muttering that he felt "consid'able shuck up like," crawled away like a whipped puppy. To every one whom he met, Pete, whose intellect seemed to have weakened in sympathy with his frame, remarked feebly that he was consid'able shuck up like, and vouchsafed no other explanation. Even to his wife he only said that he felt purty consid'able shuck up like, and that the boys would have to get on to-night without him. There are some scoundrels whose very malignity is shaken out of them for the time being by a thorough drubbing.

"I'm afraid you're going to have trouble with your arm, Bud," said Ralph tenderly.

"Never mind; I put in my best licks fer *Him*, that air time, Mr. Hartsook." Ralph shivered a little at thought of this, but if it was right to knock Jones down at all, why might not Bud do it "heartily as unto the Lord?"

Gideon did not feel any more honest pleasure in chastising the Midianites than did Bud in sending Pete Jones away purty consid'able shuck up like.

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

SHOCKY, whose feet had flown as soon as he saw the final fall of Pete Jones, told the whole story to the wondering and admiring ears of Miss Hawkins, who unhappily could not remember anything at the East just like it; to the frightened ears of the rheumatic old lady who felt sure her ole man's talk and stubbornness would be the ruin of him, and to the indignant ears of the old soldier who was hobbling up and down, sentinel-wise, in front of his cabin, standing guard over himself.

"No, I won't leave," he said to Ralph and Bud. "You see I jest won't. What would Gin'ral Winfield Scott say ef he knew that one of them as fit at Lundy's Lane backed out, retreated, run fer fear of a passel of thieves? No, sir; me and the old flintlock will live and die together. I'll put a thunderin' charge of buckshot into the first one of them scoundrels as comes up the holler. It'll be another Lundy's Lane. And you, Mr. Hartsook, may send Scott word that ole Pearson, as fit at Lundy's Lane

under him, died a-fightin' thieves on Rocky Branch, in Hoopole Kyounty, State of Injeanny."

And the old man hobbled faster and faster, taxing his wooden leg to the very utmost, as if his victory depended on the vehemence with which he walked his beat.

Mrs. Pearson sat wringing her hands and looking appealingly at Martha Hawkins, who stood in the door, in despair, looking appealingly at Bud. Bud was stupefied by the old man's stubbornness and his own pain, and in his turn appealed mutely to the master, in whose resources he had boundless confidence. Ralph, seeing that all depended on him, was taxing his wits to think of some way to get round Pearson's stubbornness. Shocky hung to the old man's coat and pulled away at him with many entreating words, but the venerable, bare-headed sentinel strode up and down furiously, with his flintlock on his shoulder and his basket-knife in his belt.

Just at this point somebody could be seen indistinctly through the bushes coming up the hollow.

"Halt!" cried the old hero. "Who goes there?"

"It's me, Mr. Pearson. Don't shoot me, please."

It was the voice of Hannah Thomson. Hearing that the whole neighborhood was rising against the benefactor of Shocky and of her family, she had

slipped away from the eyes of her mistress, and run with breathless haste to give warning in the cabin on Rocky Branch. Seeing Ralph, she blushed, and went into the cabin.

"Well," said Ralph, "the enemy is not coming yet. Let us hold a council of war."

This thought came to Ralph like an inspiration. It pleased the old man's whim, and he sat down on the door-step.

"Now, I suppose," said Ralph, "that General Winfield Scott always looked into things a little before he went into a fight. Didn't he?"

"To be sure," assented the old man.

"Well," said Ralph. "What is the condition of the enemy? I suppose the whole neighborhood's against us."

"To be sure," said the old man. The rest were silent, but all felt the statement to be about true.

"Next," said Ralph, "I suppose General Winfield Scott would always inquire into the condition of his own troops. Now let us see. Captain Pearson has Bud, who is the right wing, badly crippled by having his arm broken in the first battle." (Miss Hawkins looked pale.)

"To be sure," said the old man.

"And I am the left wing, pretty good at giving advice, but very slender in a fight."

"To be sure," said the old man.

"And Shocky and Miss Martha and Hannah good aids, but nothing in a battle."

"To be sure," said the basket-maker, a little doubtfully.

"Now let's look at the arms and accouterments, I think you call them. Well, this old musket has been loaded——"

"This ten year," said the old lady.

"And the lock is so rusty that you could not cock it when you wanted to take aim at Hannah."

The old man looked foolish, and muttered "To be sure."

"And there isn't another round of ammunition in the house."

The old man was silent.

"Now let us look at the incumbrances. Here's the old lady and Shocky. If you fight, the enemy will be pleased. It will give them a chance to kill you. And then the old lady will die and they will do with Shocky as they please."

"To be sure," said the old man reflectively.

"Now," said Ralph, "General Winfield Scott, under such circumstances, would retreat in good order. Then, when he could muster his forces rightly, he would drive the enemy from his ground."

"To be sure," said the old man. "What ort I to do?"

"Have you any friends?"

"Well, yes; ther's my brother over in Jackson Kyounty. I mout go there."

"Well," said Bud, "do you just go down to Spring-in-rock and stay there. Them folks won't be here tell midnight. I'll come fer you at nine with my roan colt, and I'll set you down over on the big road on Buckeye Run. Then you can git on the mail-wagon that passes there about five o'clock in the mornin', and go over to Jackson County and keep shady till we want you to face the enemy and to swear agin some folks. And then we'll send fer you."

"To be sure," said the old man in a broken voice. "I reckon General Winfield Scott wouldn't disapprove of such a maneuver as that thar."

Miss Martha beamed on Bud to his evident delight, for he carried his painful arm part of the way home with her. Ralph noticed that Hannah looked at *him* with a look full of contending emotions. He read admiration, gratitude, and doubt in the expression of her face, as she turned toward home.

"Well, good-by, ole woman," said Pearson, as he took up his little handkerchief full of things and started for his hiding-place; "good-by. I didn't never think I'd desart you, and ef the old flintlock hadn't a been rusty, I'd a staid and died right here

by the ole cabin. But I reckon 'ta'n't best to be brash." And Shocky looked after him, as he hobbled away over the stones, more than ever convinced that God had forgotten all about things on Flat Creek. He gravely expressed his opinion to the master the next day.

* The elaborate etymological treatment of this word in its various forms in our best dictionary is a fine illustration of the fact that something more than scholarship is needed for penetrating the mysteries of current folk-speech. *Brash*—often *bresh*—in the sense of refuse boughs of trees, is only another form of *brush*; the two are used as one word by the people. *Brash* in the sense of brittle has no conscious connection with the noun in popular usage, but it is accounted by the people the same word as *brush* in the sense of rash or impetuous. The suggestion in the Century Dictionary that the words spelled *brash* are of modern formation violates the soundest canon of antiquarian research, which is that a word phrase or custom widely diffused among plain or rustic people is of necessity of ancient origin. Now *brash*, the adjective, exists in both senses in two or three of the most widely separated dialects of the United States, and hence must have come from England. Indeed, it appears in Wright's Dictionary of Provincial English in precisely the sense it has in the text.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ODDS AND ENDS.

THE Spring-in-rock, or, as it was sometimes, by a curious perversion, called, the "rock-in-spring," was a spring running out of a cave-like fissure in a high limestone cliff. Here the old man sheltered himself on that dreary Christmas evening, until Bud brought his roan colt to the top of the cliff above, and he and Ralph helped the old man up the cliff and into the saddle. Ralph went back to bed, but Bud, who was only too eager to put in his best licks, walked by the side of old John Pearson the six miles over to Buckeye Run, and at last, after eleven o'clock, he deposited him in a hollow sycamore by the road, there to wait the coming of the mail-wagon that would carry him into Jackson County.

"Good-by," said the basket-maker, as Bud mounted the colt to return. "Ef I'm wanted jest send me word, and I'll make a forrard movement any time. I don't like this 'ere thing of running off in the night-time. But I reckon General Winfield Scott would a ordered a retreat ef he'd a been in

my shoes. I'm lots obleeged to you. Akordin' to my tell, we're all of us selfish in everything; but I'll be dog-on'd ef I don't believe you and one or two more is exceptions."

Whether it was that the fact that Pete Jones had got consid'able shuck up demoralized his followers, or whether it was that the old man's flight was suspected, the mob did not turn out in very great force, and the tarring was postponed indefinitely, for by the time they came together it became known somehow that the man with a wooden leg had outrun them all. But the escape of one devoted victim did not mollify the feelings of the people toward the next one.

By the time Bud returned his arm was very painful, and the next day he went under Dr. Small's treatment to reduce the fracture. Whatever suspicions Bud might have of Pete Jones, he was not afflicted with Ralph's dread of the silent young doctor. And if there was anything Small admired it was physical strength and courage. Small wanted Bud on his side, and least of all did he want him to be Ralph's champion. So that the silent, cool, and skillful doctor went to work to make an impression on Bud Means.

Other influences were at work upon him also. Mrs. Means volleyed and thundered in her usual

style about his "takin' up with a one-legged thief, and runnin' arter that master that was a mighty suspicious kind of a customer, akordin' to her tell. She'd allers said so. Ef she'd a been consulted he wouldn't a been hired. He warn't fit company fer nobody."

And old Jack Means 'lowed Bud must want to have *their* barns burnt like some other folkses had been. Fer his part, he had sense enough to know they was some people as it wouldn't do to set a body's self agin. And as fer him, he didn't butt his brains out agin a buckeye-tree. Not when he was sober. And so they managed, during Bud's confinement to the house, to keep him well supplied with all the ordinary discomforts of life.

But one visit from Martha Hawkins, ten words of kindly inquiry from her, and the remark that his broken arm reminded her of something she had seen at the East and something somebody said the time she was to Bosting, were enough to repay the champion a thousand fold for all that he suffered. Indeed, that visit, and the recollection of Ralph's saying that Jesus Christ was a sort of a Flat Creeker himself, were manna in the wilderness to Bud.

Poor Shocky was sick. The excitement had been too much for him, and though his fever was very slight it was enough to produce just a little delir-

ium. Either Ralph or Miss Martha was generally at the cabin.

"They're coming," said Shocky to Ralph, "they're coming. Pete Jones is a-going to bind me out for a hundred years. I wish Hanner would hold me so's he couldn't. God's forgot all about us here in Flat Creek, and there's nobody to help it."

And he shivered at every sudden sound. He was never free from this delirious fright except when the master held him tight in his arms. He staggered around the floor, the very shadow of Shocky, and was so terrified by the approach of darkness that Ralph staid in the cabin on Wednesday night and Miss Hawkins staid on Thursday night. On Friday, Bud sent a note to Ralph, asking him to come and see him.

"You see, Mr. Hartsook, I ha'n't forgot what we said about puttin' in our best licks for Jesus Christ. I've been a-trying to read some about him while I set here. And I read where he said something about doing fer the least of his brethren being all the same like as if it was done fer Jesus Christ hisself. Now there's Shocky. I reckon, p'r'aps, ef anybody is a little brother of Jesus Christ, it is that Shocky. Pete Jones and his brother Bill is detarmined to have him back there to-morry. Bekase, you see, Pete's one of the County Commissioners,

and to-morry's the day that they bind out. He wants to bind out that boy jes' to spite ole Pearson and you and me. You see, the ole woman's been helped by the neighbors, and he'll claim Shocky to be a pauper, and they a'n't no human soul here as dares to do a thing *contrary* to Pete. Couldn't you git him over to Lewisburg? I'll lend you my roan colt."

Ralph thought a minute. He dared not take Shocky to the uncle's where he found his only home. But there was Miss Nancy Sawyer, the old maid who was everybody's blessing. He could ask her to keep him. And, at any rate, he would save Shocky somehow.

As he went out in the dusk, he met Hannah in the lane.

CHAPTER XIX.

FACE TO FACE.

IN the lane, in the dark, under the shadow of the barn, Ralph met Hannah carrying her bucket of milk (they have no pails in Indiana).¹ He could see only the white foam on the milk, and Hannah's white face. Perhaps it was well that he could not see how white Hannah's face was at that moment when a sudden trembling made her set down the heavy bucket. At first neither spoke. The recollection of all the joy of that walk together in the night came upon them both. And a great sense of loss made the night seem supernaturally dark to Ralph. Nor was it any lighter in the hopeless heart of the bound girl. The presence of Ralph did not now, as before, make the darkness of her life light.

"Hannah——" said Ralph presently, and stopped.

¹ The total absence of the word *pail* not only from the dialect, but even from cultivated speech in the Southern and Border States until very recently, is a fact I leave to be explained on further investigation. The word is an old one and a good one, but I fancy that its use in England could not have been generally diffused in the seventeenth century. So a Hoosier or a Kentuckian never *pared* an apple, but *peeled* it. Much light might be thrown on the origin and history of our dialects by investigating their deficiencies.

For he could not finish the sentence. With a rush there came upon him a consciousness of the suspicions that filled Hannah's mind. And with it there came a feeling of guilt. He saw himself from her stand-point, and felt a remorse almost as keen as it could have been had he been a criminal. And this sudden and morbid sense of his guilt as it appeared to Hannah paralyzed him. But when Hannah lifted her bucket with her hand, and the world with her heavy heart, and essayed to pass him, Ralph rallied and said:

"You don't believe all these lies that are told about me."

"I don't believe anything, Mr. Hartsook; that is, I don't want to believe anything against you. And I wouldn't mind anything they say if it wasn't for two things"—here she stammered and looked down.

"If it wasn't for what?" said Ralph with a spice of indignant denial in his voice.

Hannah hesitated, but Ralph pressed the question with eagerness.

"I saw you cross that blue-grass pasture the night—the night that you walked home with me." She would have said the night of the robbery, but her heart smote her, and she adopted the more kindly form of the sentence.

Ralph would have explained, but how?

"I did cross the pasture," he began, "but——"

Just here it occurred to Ralph that there was no reason for his night excursion across the pasture. Hannah again took up her bucket, but he said:

"Tell me what else you have against me."

"I haven't anything against you. Only I am poor and friendless, and you oughtn't to make my life any heavier. They say that you have paid attention to a great many girls. I don't know why you should want to trifle with me."

Ralph answered her this time. He spoke low. He spoke as though he were speaking to God. "If any man says that I ever trifled with any woman, he lies. I have never loved but one, and you know who that is. And God knows."

"I don't know what to say, Mr. Hartsook." Hannah's voice was broken. These solemn words of love were like a river in the desert, and she was like a wanderer dying of thirst. "I don't know, Mr. Hartsook. If I was alone, it wouldn't matter. But I've got my blind mother and my poor Shocky to look after. And I don't want to make mistakes. And the world is so full of lies I don't know what to believe. Somehow I can't help believing what you say. You seem to speak so true. But——"

"But what?" said Ralph.

"But you know how I saw you just as kind to Martha Hawkins on Sunday as—as——"

"Han—ner!" It was the melodious voice of the angry Mrs. Means, and Hannah lifted her pail and disappeared.

Standing in the shadow of his own despair, Ralph felt how dark a night could be when it had no promise of morning.

And Dr. Small, who had been stabling his horse just inside the barn, came out and moved quietly into the house just as though he had not listened intently to every word of the conversation.

As Ralph walked away he tried to comfort himself by calling to his aid the bulldog in his character. But somehow it did not do him any good. For what is a bulldog but a stoic philosopher? Stoicism has its value, but Ralph had come to a place where stoicism was of no account. The memory of the Helper, of his sorrow, his brave and victorious endurance, came when stoicism failed. Happiness might go out of life, but in the light of Christ's life happiness seemed but a small element anyhow. The love of woman might be denied him, but there still remained what was infinitely more precious and holy, the love of God. There still remained the possibility of heroic living. Working, suffering, and enduring still remained. And he who can work

for God and endure for God, surely has yet the best of life left. And, like the knights who could find the Holy Grail only in losing themselves, Hartsook, in throwing his happiness out of the count, found the purest happiness, a sense of the victory of the soul over the tribulations of life. The man who knows this victory scarcely needs the encouragement of the hope of future happiness. There is a real heaven in bravely lifting the load of one's own sorrow and work.

And it was a good thing for Ralph that the danger hanging over Shocky made immediate action necessary.

CHAPTER XX.

GOD REMEMBERS SHOCKY.

AT four o'clock the next morning, in the midst of a driving snow, Ralph went timidly up the lane toward the homely castle of the Meanses. He went timidly, for he was afraid of Bull. But he found Bud waiting for him, with the roan colt bridled and saddled. The roan colt was really a large three-year-old, full of the finest sort of animal life, and having, as Bud declared, "a mighty sight of hoss sense fer his age." He seemed to understand at once that there was something extraordinary on hand when he was brought out of his comfortable quarters at four in the morning in the midst of a snow-storm. Bud was sure that the roan colt felt his responsibility.

In the days that followed, Ralph often had occasion to remember this interview with Bud, who had risked much in bringing his fractured arm out into the cold, damp air. Jonathan never claved to David more earnestly than did Bud this December morning to Ralph.