

AN HUMBLE HERO

BY THOMAS P. MONTFORT
COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY THOMAS P. MONTFORT

CHAPTER V.
YOUR UNCLE JONATHAN TURNER.
MELVIN WAS MORE FORTUNATE than he had dared hope, for he had gone but a short distance when he came into a road and after following that a little way ran on to a house.

It is true it was not much of a house, being merely a small log cabin, and its surroundings were meager and unimpressive, promising little in the way of comforts; but, for all that, it would afford shelter and food, and this was a great deal under the circumstances.

He rode up to the tumble-down rail fence that stood between the yard and the road and was preparing to call to let his presence be known when a man came around a corner of the house. He was a little, wiry, weather-beaten old chap, almost hidden under a mammoth beard bristling with snow. He was not expecting a strange visitor, and the appearance of Melvin was a great surprise to him. He stopped short, his mouth and eyes flew wide open, and he stood staring in perfect silence.

It was Melvin who spoke first. "I have lost my way," he said, "and I am looking for a place to spend the night. What chance is there for stopping with you?"

If Melvin expected this man to prove as reticent and morose as the one he had just passed, his mind was soon disabused of that idea, for the response to his speech, although not altogether relevant, was prompt, vigorous and effective.

"Lord-a-massy!" he exclaimed. "You mean to tell me that you done plumb up an lost your way an took to wander in our woods for all the world like a stray suckle calf? Great granny, man, what made you go an do such a thing as that?"

"For the reason that I couldn't help it, I presume," Melvin answered.

"Couldn't help it? Why, Lord-a-massy, man, what do you mean? You ain't a-min to tell me you couldn't help gittin lost, are you?"

"I guess I am."

"Waal, I'll be d d switched! That shore beats my time, as the feller says. The idea of any human critter havin little enough sense to go an get lost in the woods! Why, say, a cat knows more than that!"

"Very likely," Melvin replied. "But what of it?"

"Nuthin, only it shore stamps me that a grown-up man like you'd go an get lost like this."

"Isn't it just barely possible that you might do such a thing?"

"No such a thing as what?"

"Get lost."

"Me, get lost! Your Uncle Jonathan Turner got lost? Waal, that's a good un shore. Say, did you ever hear tell of a grown hog gittin lost?"

"I don't know that I ever did."

"Waal, when you do hear of sicker a thing you may then begin to figure out that it's just barely possible that Jonathan Turner might somedays lose hisself in the woods."

"Do you think it impossible for you to lose your way in a strange wood?"

"No, I don't think nuthin 'bout it. I just know it's impossible."

"Where would you keep from losing your way?"

"Just like I'd roll off a log, I'd just do it."

"Suppose you were in a strange place, and coming to two roads, you didn't know which one to take. Then what?"

"Oh, I'd know all right which one to take."

"How would you know?"

"Just have sense enough to know, as the feller says."

"Would you? Well, all right. I am anxious just now to learn whether or not you can give me shelter for the night."

"I guess that's so. Rld a right smart piece today, I reckon?"

"Yes, quite a way."

"Jedgins from appearances, I'd take you to be a stranger in these parts?"

"I am."

"More account than Beckett's Mill I'd think so."

"Reckoned from what I'd heard tell of it that it shorely must be. S'pose now, you have business in these parts?"

"Yes, some."

"Guess you ain't one them preachin fellers come down yere sorter jiggin on holdin some meetin's over at the Coon Run meetin house?"

"No."

"Never preach none, eh?"

"I never have."

"Th, huh! Jest a plain ever'day common cussin man, I reckon?"

"I haven't ever made it a practice to do much 'cussin,' as you say, but I've always been tempted today to wish I was an expert in that line. But, say, how about stopping with you tonight? I've got to find lodgins some place, and it's about time I was knowing where."

"That's so, stranger; yes, sir-ee. Jest about time you was findin out whar; yes, Mr. Reckon you ain't sorter jiggin on tryin to git to teach our school, are you?"

"No, no schoolteacher."

"Hain't, eh? Guess mebbe you might be kinder lookin round with a notion of buyin a farm in these parts?"

"No. All I'm looking around for now is a place to spend the night."

"Heckle. Naturally you'd be more interested in that than anything else just now."

"Yes, and I asked if I could stop with you."

"That's a fact, stranger. You shore done that very identical thing. I ain't a-pretendin to say you didn't."

"But you haven't answered me."

"No, I guess I ain't. I'm glad you got my mind to stop on them other things, an I clean forgot all about it. You know how sicc things are some-

derned idiot asyain, with no more sense than a gat-sop, an his opinion is that you are a-lyin an that that's a good deal back of you that you balu't wantin knowed."

CHAPTER VI.
SIM SURPRISES HIS FRIENDS.
SIM BANKS DID NOT GO HOME at once, but passed on down the street in the direction of Hicks' store. It had been his custom to go there every night to join the little group of men who always congregated around the stove in front of the door in the summer to look away the idle hours.

He had long been one of the leading spirits in these meetings, and heretofore he had come to them boldly, and in the talks that followed his voice had been heard taking an important part. But tonight he approached with halting steps and slumped shoulders and sat down quietly on the edge of the platform of the very outsiders of the group. He hoped no one would notice his presence, and he was careful to do nothing to attract attention to it.

Pap Sampson was there and Jason Roberts and Jim Thorn and a number of others, and most in evidence in the conversation was Ebenezer Sparks.

Very naturally, the subject under discussion was the war and the battle that had that day been fought in their hearing. Ebenezer, with wonderful effrontery, seized the first opportunity to begin a relay of the oft told stories of brave deeds performed by him in the Mexican war and to recount his consuming desire to again take up a soldier's life and join in the fight and experience the dangers and hardships of war as he had done in days gone by.

Jim listened to Ebenezer in astonishment. It was a mystery to him how a man could have the assurance to boast of his bravery when only a few hours ago he had shown the very men to whom he was talking that he was an arrant coward. Sim knew that he had acted the part of a coward, and he knew that every man there knew it, and he was resolved that if no one mentioned it until he did it would never be mentioned.

Ebenezer talked on for some time before Pap Sampson brought his came down with a thump and said:

"Thar, Ebenezer Sparks, that'll do. We all know how brave you are, so thar ain't no grain of use in the world for you to waste your breath a-tellin us about it. Lord, you made that all plumb plain to us today, you an Sim Banks both."

"Sim don't seem to be doin much talkin 'bout the war he done," Jason observed, with a laugh. "Guess he be- lieves in lettin his actions speak for themselves."

"Lord, Jason, I reckon the way Sim's woman done kind of took the tucks outen him," Pap said. Then, turning to Sim, he added, "She kind of bit you pooly hard, didn't she, Sim?"

"No harder'n I deserved, I guess," Sim replied dryly. "I did act the miserable coward, an it ain't no wonder she was ashamed of me."

"Say, by granny, but that's one way to talk, ain't it? Jason said after a short silence. "You ain't a bit like Ebenezer, Sim. He done more cowardly than you, but you won't ketch him ovain of it, nary a time."

"I can't help nothin 'bout what Ebenezer does," Sim replied. "I don't do no good to deny the truth when everbody knows what I done."

"You're right, thar, Sim," Pap Sampson said heartily. "Addin vinegar to a sound puddin ain't goin to make it no sweeter, an addin a lie to another fault ain't goin to make the other fault no less. Them is gospel truths for thar ever, an be one outside of the Holy Writ, an be a good thing for you, Ebenezer, to take 'em into your craw an digest 'em along at odd specks."

"Pip Sampson," Ebenezer exclaimed, "bristling up, do you 'low to insinuate that I be a-lyin?"

"Lord, no, Ebenezer! I ain't no hand to insinuate, but when a coward makes out like he's brave if he ain't lyin he's gittin right an next door to it."

"You better be leered on," Pap, Jim Thorn said, "or first thing you know you'll be in the dog house."

Louisa would learn what he had done, and she would know that he had done it for her sake. He would not tell her, but others would. His knowledge of human nature was limited, but it was broad enough to tell him that his praises sung by others would be far more effective than if sung by himself.

That she would be pleased he felt assured, for she would understand how well he loved her and how more ready he was than any one else on earth to stand up in her defense. Then, too, she would realize that he was not the contemptible coward she had thought him, and because of which she had spoken of him and to him in such harsh terms. Perhaps she would even speak words of praise for his conduct, and perhaps—oh, happy thought!—she might put her arms about his neck and kiss him. That would be a reward indeed, and for such a reward he would be willing to fight the whole world.

Fond, sweet hope! But how many of our most precious hopes are born only to perish with their first breath of life!

When Sim reached home, he found the house dark and Louisa in bed. He went in and struck a light and prepared to retire. His wife was asleep, and he moved about noiselessly so as not to wake her. His eye fell on a scrap of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically he took it up and glanced at the writing it bore. Instantly he sat up and read it eagerly through. Then, puzzled and mystified, he read it again and again. "These were the words the paper contained:

"One-Joe of Ayer's Pills cured my dyspepsia. I. D. Caldwell, Myrtle, Md. Jan. 12, 1899. Bath, Vt."

"They all looked up in astonishment, and there was Sim Banks standing among them, his eyes ablaze with anger and his form trembling with suppressed rage."

"Jim Thorn," he repeated, "you are

HON. ISAAC D. WITHERSPON.
"A Christian Gentleman and a True Nobleman"—Sketch of His Life.

Ex-Judge Isaac D. Witherspoon, of Yorkville, passed peacefully away on Sunday morning, 24th inst., after an illness of twelve days with pleurisy. The Yorkville correspondent of The State says that "his death was as calm as the slumbering of a babe upon the breast of its mother. His age was 65 years. Judge Witherspoon was an elder of the First Presbyterian church at this place, a Christian gentleman and true noble man. No worthy object of charity or benevolence was turned away by him, and in his legal practice he never refused to give advice on account of the poverty of the applicant. During the heavy upon us, he was the leader of this county in the redemption of the State from Radical rule. He was beloved by this community and his death was a heavy loss to the State. He leaves a wife and two children, Miss Jessie and Dr. William I. Witherspoon, of Sheffield, Ala., with a large circle of relatives, and many friends to mourn his departure."

Isaac Donnison Witherspoon was born in York and was one of the sons of the Hon. Isaac Donnison Witherspoon, who was for many years Senator from York district and one of the leaders in State politics. His mother was Miss Reid of North Carolina. He belonged to the historic family of Witherspoons of which the Rev. John Witherspoon, of Princeton college, signer of the Declaration of Independence, was one of the most conspicuous members, and Robert Witherspoon, of Charleston, South Carolina, another. The young Isaac Witherspoon entered the South Carolina college and graduated in 1854 along with James Lowndes, Benjamin R. Stuart, J. H. Brooks, Hayne McKeen, Rev. J. R. Riley, former Judge C. P. Townsend, J. H. Whitner and others. Then he pursued the study of law, and his admission to the bar entered into partnership with the late Wm. B. Wilson, and the firm practiced with great success.

At the beginning of the war, Judge Witherspoon enlisted in the 15th regimant and served until debate health caused a transfer to the branch of the treasury department of the Confederacy in Columbia.

York County was spared by the Federal armies, but suffered worse devastation, if possible, in 1871 and 1872 because of the brutal Ka Klux raids of the Federal troops, who shot Mr. Merrill, an officer in the United States army, and received \$200 reward for the arrest of every alleged Ka Klux, innocent or guilty. Judge Witherspoon had his hands full assisting his distressed clients. Not for years did the county recover from this dragooned.

In 1874 a determined effort was made to throw out the Radical party in York, and Judge Witherspoon was nominated for Senator by the Democrats and after a stirring canvass was elected with the majority and was elected to the Senate in the Democratic leaders in the struggle which was long, but attended with few serious consequences. Judge Witherspoon became acting Governor, and was chosen president pro tem of the Senate and served as such until he was elected judge of the Sixth circuit in place of the unique Thomas J. Mackey. He had previously formed a partnership with Charles E. Spencer, which was now dissolved. After serving several terms, Judge Witherspoon voluntarily retired to private life and resumed the practice of law. He was actively engaged at the bar at the time of his death.

Judge Witherspoon married Miss Wright, daughter of Col. William Wright, who was the president and chief builder and owner of the King's Mountain railroad. He had two children, Dr. William Witherspoon and Miss Leslie Witherspoon, both of whom, with their mother, survive him. He has two brothers living, Dr. J. Harvey Witherspoon and Mr. Joseph H. Witherspoon.

Judge Witherspoon was a conservative man, a good citizen and a safe counselor. He had many friends throughout the State who will be doubly grateful for his death. He was a friend and colleague, Judge W. H. Wallace, Judge Fraser, another contemporary in the reconstruction and subsequently on the bench, died not four months ago.

"Yes, but are you going to answer me?"

"Why, to be shore I am. What reason under the sun could I have for not answerin you, I'd like to know? Yes, sir-ee. I 'low you hain't none of them peddler-fellers what comes around sellin of pills, an you, stranger?"

"I am not."

"Reckoned most shore you couldn't be. Iugen'ally them pill peddlers is right smart, peart lookin fellers. Guess now more likely you might be one of them doctor chaps huntin a place to set up in business?"

"No, I'm nothing of the kind. But, see here, are you going to compel me to spend the night out here in the road?"

"Why, I reckon not. I hain't no right to compel you to do nothin to my figner it, as the feller says. You're your own boss, I s'pose, an I 'low you go or stay just whar you please."

"No, I'm not a boss. I'm a man."

"Guess you're a goin jest whar you please now, ain't you?"

"Perhaps."

"An I reckon you make it out that it ain't a blamed bit of my business whar you're a goin nor what you're a goin for?"

"I rather suspect you are about correct there, Mr. Turner."

"Jest so, an I guess mebbe you're plumb right too. At the same time I 'low you can't be a part of the war come down to try to lick we us?"

"Certainly not."

"I knowed you couldn't hardly be, but with all them soldiers an armies a-goin about the way they are, a feller can't be much shore about nothin no more. Mebbe, now, you've come down yere to?"

"Great Scott! It doesn't matter in the least to you what I came down here for, but as jest seen determined to know I'll tell you and be done with it. I represent a company of capitalists who believe there are rich deposits of mineral in this section, and my business here is to investigate and learn whether or not their surmises are correct. Now you know why I am here, and I hope you'll tell me without any further delay whether you are going to give me shelter for the night."

"Why, yes, sir-ee, I'll shore do that. I ain't no reason on earth for not tellin you, as I can see, nary a speck. But I wonder, now, what kind of mineral they believe thinks they're a-goin to find down yere?"

"Great Caesar, man! Let me have some supper and a place to rest, and I'll tell you everything I know. I've been in the saddle all day, and I'm dreadfully hungry and tired."

"Why, shorely, Lord-a-massy, man, you might jest as well 'n done that long ago 'stead of gettin thar chewin the rag all this time."

"Why didn't you tell me long ago that I might stop?"

"I was a mind to; but, as I said while ago, my mind got to runnin on some other thing, an I forgot it. Wonder if them fellers ever 'low in to find silver in these parts?"

"No. Where shall I put my horse?"

"Jest leave him thar at the fence. I'll tote him to the stable directly. Reckon if them fellers hain't calculatin to find gold nor silver 'bout yere they must be a-gibberin on findin somethin else."

"Naturally."

"Guess mebbe it moughtn't be iron, now, might it?"

In spite of the fact that he was tired, hungry and annoyed, Melvin burst into a roar of laughter. Turner's question that he was so persistent and ridiculous that it had become amusing. Presently Melvin said:

"Now, Mr. Turner, I am positively not going to answer another question until I have had supper, so you need not put yourself to the trouble of asking me another thing. Do you understand?"

"To be shore I do, an you'll find I ain't the man to go on askin a feller questions when I see he don't want to be bothered with 'em. Nary time I ain't. But, by granny, stranger, it puzzles me to figger out what kind of mineral them men are countin on findin yere—It does shore! Reckon they can't be spectin to find copper nor lead, can they?"

Melvin rushed into the house, leaving Turner outside to get away the horse and powder all alone the questions that, though they did not affect him in the least, interested him deeply.

And as Turner pondered an idea came to him, for he lacked a great deal of being as much of a fool as he seemed. He stopped on his way to the stable with the horse and, nodding his head knowingly, muttered to himself these words:

"Come down yere to smell round 'n mineral! Powerful likely story, that is, when thar ain't as much mineral in this hull blame section as a feller could put in a feller's ear. Come down yere an see what he can see in the ground! That thar's all 'noughly reasonable, an of course I believe it—in a pic's eye! You are a slick un, young feller, but you ain't quite slick enough to slide down your Uncle Jonathan Turner's throat, not quite. Your Uncle Jonathan mayn't be much to look at, but he lacks a hull passel of bein a

blar, a dirty, cowardly, miserable, sneakin blar, an you'll take back them words, or I'll kick your head clean down your throat!"

Thorn sprang to his feet and started to run, but in an instant Sim had hold of his collar with one hand and with the other had given him a blow on the side of the head that sent him to the floor limp as a rag. Sim would have followed him in his advantage and pounded Thorn unmercifully, but Pap Sampson and the rest interfered, and five or six of them held him while the others got Thorn away.

After it was all over and Sim had been released they stood about him for some time, looking at him in silence and with kind words. To them he had suddenly become a new man, and they felt that they did not know him. It was Hicks who broke the pause.

"Why, Sim," he said, "what's come over you? Who'd 'a ever dreamt of you doin such a thing as that?"

"I don't know nothin 'bout it, but I see you ain't nothin 'bout Loney's then," Sim replied, not exactly in line with Hicks' questions. "I'll hit him ag'in if he dast to say sich another thing, an I'll hit anybody else that does it, an I'll hit you, too."

"Well, that's all right, Sim, but you jest calm down now. Jim Thorn, you the only one that said anything, an you've done hit him, so thar ain't no more to do, an you'd jest as well git wick."

"My land, Sim, you shore hit him a good un!" Jason said. "I never see a purrier lick struck in all my life."

"An it was all done so quick," another observed. "Why, them words wasn't much more'n outen Jim Thorn's mouth till Sim was a-standin up here an sayin, 'Jim Thorn, you are a liar!'"

"Just that a-way. Then Jim starts to run an afore I knowed it Sim had gathered him by the collar an give him the lick."

"An wasn't it a lick, though?" Jason said. "Why, say, it jest kivered Jim over thar so quick that I bet he never knowed what done it."

"I bet he didn't know nothin touched him—jest flopped down thar for all the world like a shot hog. Didn't 'low it was in you to hit a feller like that, Sim."

"Lord, I reckon Sim never knowed it neither," Pap Sampson said, "but he knows it now, an you all better look out. No matter how harmless a dog is while he's asleep, he may be the worst kind of a dog when you wake him up. An it shorely ain't no mistake."

"An you'd all better not foot with him if you don't want to git hurt," Hicks added.

"You'd all better not say nothin 'bout Loney's," Sim said. "Lesh'n you all wants to git your heads punched."

"Guess nobody hain't got to say nothin 'bout Loney's," Pap Sampson replied, "so you moughtn't well quit a throwin that at us. Jim Thorn had no business to speak the word he did, even if it had been a true word, an I most know it wasn't, an you done right an nat'ral to take it up. I'm a peaceable man myself, as you uns all know, an I ain't got no use for no private life an up in no fursin an that I ain't never hit nobody in all my life, but you jest let some feller say a single word ag'in my woman, an if the fur don't fly it won't be my fault. Them's my sentiments ever time, an I ain't a-keerin who knows 'em."

"Suppose Sim done right," another said, with that ready sympathy people are apt to feel for the victor as against the vanquished. "I'd a done jest like him if I'd 'a been in his place, only I bet I'd 'a laid Jim Thorn out so's he moughtn't 'a got up no more for a month."

"By granny," said another. "I 'low Jim got of pow'ful easy myself! It were a good thing it wasn't me he had to deal with."

"An you can let your hide it be moughtly fortunate for him," remarked a third, "that it wasn't me."

Pap Sampson thumped his cane against the door and laughed.

"You uns are all a-talkin pow'ful big," he said, "but you uns better not get no idee that Jim Thorn ain't dead yet. 'Taint nothin to go foolin round a nule's heels 'less you got business thar."

As Sim Banks walked home that night he felt greatly elated, and in his soul there was a kind of feeling closely akin to intoxication. He stood erect, with a bearing proud and disdainful, his head held well up and walked with a step firm and confident.

In knocking Jim Thorn down the way he did he had demonstrated to his neighbors that he was not so much a coward as they had supposed. That within itself was a great deal to be proud of, for he felt that in removing the stain of cowardice from his name, he had raised an almost insupportable burden from his soul. But that was not all nor yet the chief use of his elation.

Louisa would learn what he had done, and she would know that he had done it for her sake. He would not tell her, but others would. His knowledge of human nature was limited, but it was broad enough to tell him that his praises sung by others would be far more effective than if sung by himself.

That she would be pleased he felt assured, for she would understand how well he loved her and how more ready he was than any one else on earth to stand up in her defense. Then, too, she would realize that he was not the contemptible coward she had thought him, and because of which she had spoken of him and to him in such harsh terms. Perhaps she would even speak words of praise for his conduct, and perhaps—oh, happy thought!—she might put her arms about his neck and kiss him. That would be a reward indeed, and for such a reward he would be willing to fight the whole world.

Fond, sweet hope! But how many of our most precious hopes are born only to perish with their first breath of life!

When Sim reached home, he found the house dark and Louisa in bed. He went in and struck a light and prepared to retire. His wife was asleep, and he moved about noiselessly so as not to wake her. His eye fell on a scrap of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically he took it up and glanced at the writing it bore. Instantly he sat up and read it eagerly through. Then, puzzled and mystified, he read it again and again. "These were the words the paper contained:

"One-Joe of Ayer's Pills cured my dyspepsia. I. D. Caldwell, Myrtle, Md. Jan. 12, 1899. Bath, Vt."

"They all looked up in astonishment, and there was Sim Banks standing among them, his eyes ablaze with anger and his form trembling with suppressed rage."

"Jim Thorn," he repeated, "you are

blar, a dirty, cowardly, miserable, sneakin blar, an you'll take back them words, or I'll kick your head clean down your throat!"

Thorn sprang to his feet and started to run, but in an instant Sim had hold of his collar with one hand and with the other had given him a blow on the side of the head that sent him to the floor limp as a rag. Sim would have followed him in his advantage and pounded Thorn unmercifully, but Pap Sampson and the rest interfered, and five or six of them held him while the others got Thorn away.

After it was all over and Sim had been released they stood about him for some time, looking at him in silence and with kind words. To them he had suddenly become a new man, and they felt that they did not know him. It was Hicks who broke the pause.

"Why, Sim," he said, "what's come over you? Who'd 'a ever dreamt of you doin such a thing as that?"

"I don't know nothin 'bout it, but I see you ain't nothin 'bout Loney's then," Sim replied, not exactly in line with Hicks' questions. "I'll hit him ag'in if he dast to say sich another thing, an I'll hit anybody else that does it, an I'll hit you, too."

"Well, that's all right, Sim, but you jest calm down now. Jim Thorn, you the only one that said anything, an you've done hit him, so thar ain't no more to do, an you'd jest as well git wick."

"My land, Sim, you shore hit him a good un!" Jason said. "I never see a purrier lick struck in all my life."

"An it was all done so quick," another observed. "Why, them words wasn't much more'n outen Jim Thorn's mouth till Sim was a-standin up here an sayin, 'Jim Thorn, you are a liar!'"

"Just that a-way. Then Jim starts to run an afore I knowed it Sim had gathered him by the collar an give him the lick."

"An wasn't it a lick, though?" Jason said. "Why, say, it jest kivered Jim over thar so quick that I bet he never knowed what done it."

"I bet he didn't know nothin touched him—jest flopped down thar for all the world like a shot hog. Didn't 'low it was in you to hit a feller like that, Sim."

"Lord, I reckon Sim never knowed it neither," Pap Sampson said, "but he knows it now, an you all better look out. No matter how harmless a dog is while he's asleep, he may be the worst kind of a dog when you wake him up. An it shorely ain't no mistake."

"An you'd all better not foot with him if you don't want to git hurt," Hicks added.

"You'd all better not say nothin 'bout Loney's," Sim said. "Lesh'n you all wants to git your heads punched."

"Guess nobody hain't got to say nothin 'bout Loney's," Pap Sampson replied, "so you moughtn't well quit a throwin that at us. Jim Thorn had no business to speak the word he did, even if it had been a true word, an I most know it wasn't, an you done right an nat'ral to take it up. I'm a peaceable man myself, as you uns all know, an I ain't got no use for no private life an up in no fursin an that I ain't never hit nobody in all my life, but you jest let some feller say a single word ag'in my woman, an if the fur don't fly it won't be my fault. Them's my sentiments ever time, an I ain't a-keerin who knows 'em."

"Suppose Sim done right," another said, with that ready sympathy people are apt to feel for the victor as against the vanquished. "I'd a done jest like him if I'd 'a been in his place, only I bet I'd 'a laid Jim Thorn out so's he moughtn't 'a got up no more for a month."

"By granny," said another. "I 'low Jim got of pow'ful easy myself! It were a good thing it wasn't me he had to deal with."

"An you can let your hide it be moughtly fortunate for him," remarked a third, "that it wasn't me."

Pap Sampson thumped his cane against the door and laughed.

"You uns are all a-talkin pow'ful big," he said, "but you uns better not get no idee that Jim Thorn ain't dead yet. 'Taint nothin to go foolin round a nule's heels 'less you got business thar."

As Sim Banks walked home that night he felt greatly elated, and in his soul there was a kind of feeling closely akin to intoxication. He stood erect, with a bearing proud and disdainful, his head held well up and walked with a step firm and confident.

In knocking Jim Thorn down the way he did he had demonstrated to his neighbors that he was not so much a coward as they had supposed. That within itself was a great deal to be proud of, for he felt that in removing the stain of cowardice from his name, he had raised an almost insupportable burden from his soul. But that was not all nor yet the chief use of his elation.

Louisa would learn what he had done, and she would know that he had done it for her sake. He would not tell her, but others would. His knowledge of human nature was limited, but it was broad enough to tell him that his praises sung by others would be far more effective than if sung by himself.

That she would be pleased he felt assured, for she would understand how well he loved her and how more ready he was than any one else on earth to stand up in her defense. Then, too, she would realize that he was not the contemptible coward she had thought him, and because of which she had spoken of him and to him in such harsh terms. Perhaps she would even speak words of praise for his conduct, and perhaps—oh, happy thought!—she might put her arms about his neck and kiss him. That would be a reward indeed, and for such a reward he would be willing to fight the whole world.

Fond, sweet hope! But how many of our most precious hopes are born only to perish with their first breath of life!

When Sim reached home, he found the house dark and Louisa in bed. He went in and struck a light and prepared to retire. His wife was asleep, and he moved about noiselessly so as not to wake her. His eye fell on a scrap of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically he took it up and glanced at the writing it bore. Instantly he sat up and read it eagerly through. Then, puzzled and mystified, he read it again and again. "These were the words the paper contained:

"One-Joe of Ayer's Pills cured my dyspepsia. I. D. Caldwell, Myrtle, Md. Jan. 12, 1899. Bath, Vt."

"They all looked up in astonishment, and there was Sim Banks standing among them, his eyes ablaze with anger and his form trembling with suppressed rage."

"Jim Thorn," he repeated, "you are

blar, a dirty, cowardly, miserable, sneakin blar, an you'll take back them words, or I'll kick your head clean down your throat!"

Thorn sprang to his feet and started to run, but in an instant Sim had hold of his collar with one hand and with the other had given him a blow on the side of the head that sent him to the floor limp as a rag. Sim would have followed him in his advantage and pounded Thorn unmercifully, but Pap Sampson and the rest interfered, and five or six of them held him while the others got Thorn away.

After it was all over and Sim had been released they stood about him for some time, looking at him in silence and with kind words. To them he had suddenly become a new man, and they felt that they did not know him. It was Hicks who broke the pause.

"Why, Sim," he said, "what's come over you? Who'd 'a ever dreamt of you doin such a thing as that?"

"I don't know nothin 'bout it, but I see you ain't nothin 'bout Loney's then," Sim replied, not exactly in line with Hicks' questions. "I'll hit him ag'in if he dast to say sich another thing, an I'll hit anybody else that does it, an I'll hit you, too."

"Well, that's all right, Sim, but you jest calm down now. Jim Thorn, you the only one that said anything, an you've done hit him, so thar ain't no more to do, an you'd jest as well git wick."

"My land, Sim, you shore hit him a good un!" Jason said. "I never see a purrier lick struck in all my life."

"An it was all done so quick," another observed. "Why, them words wasn't much more'n outen Jim Thorn's mouth till Sim was a-standin up here an sayin, 'Jim Thorn, you are a liar!'"

"Just that a-way. Then Jim starts to run an afore I knowed it Sim had gathered him by the collar an give him the lick."

"An wasn't it a lick, though?" Jason said. "Why, say, it jest kivered Jim over thar so quick that I bet he never knowed what done it."

"I bet he didn't know nothin touched him—jest flopped down thar for all the world like a shot hog. Didn't 'low it was in you to hit a feller like that, Sim."

"Lord, I reckon Sim never knowed it neither," Pap Sampson said, "but he knows it now, an you all better look out. No matter how harmless a dog is while he's asleep, he may be the worst kind of a dog when you wake him up. An it shorely ain't no mistake."

"An you'd all better not foot with him if you don't want to git hurt," Hicks added.

"You'd all better not say nothin 'bout Loney's," Sim said. "Lesh'n you all wants to git your heads punched."

"Guess nobody hain't got to say nothin 'bout Loney's," Pap Sampson replied, "so you moughtn't well quit a throwin that at us. Jim Thorn had no business to speak the word he did, even if it had been a true word, an I most know it wasn't, an you done right an nat'ral to take it up. I'm a peaceable man myself, as you uns all know, an I ain't got no use for no private life an up in no fursin an that I ain't never hit nobody in all my life, but you jest let some feller say a single word ag'in my woman, an if the fur don't fly it won't be my fault. Them's my sentiments ever time, an I ain't a-keerin who knows 'em."

"Suppose Sim done right," another said, with that ready sympathy people are apt to feel for the victor as against the vanquished. "I'd a done jest like him if I'd 'a been in his place, only I bet I'd 'a laid Jim Thorn out so's he moughtn't 'a got up no more for a month."

"By granny," said another. "I 'low Jim got of pow'ful easy myself! It were a good thing it wasn't me he had to deal with."

"An you can let your hide it be moughtly fortunate for him," remarked a third, "that it wasn't me."

Pap Sampson thumped his cane against the door and laughed.

"You uns are all a-talkin pow'ful big," he said, "but you uns better not get no idee that Jim Thorn ain't dead yet. 'Taint nothin to go foolin round a nule's heels 'less you got business thar."

As Sim Banks walked home that night he felt greatly elated, and in his soul there was a kind of feeling closely akin to intoxication. He stood erect, with a bearing proud and disdainful, his head held well up and walked with a step firm and confident.

In knocking Jim Thorn down the way he did he had demonstrated to his neighbors that he was not so much a coward as they had supposed. That within itself was a great deal to be proud of, for he felt that in removing the stain of cowardice from his name, he had raised an almost insupportable burden from his soul. But that was not all nor yet the chief use of his elation.

Louisa would learn what he had done, and she would know that he had done it for her sake. He would not tell her, but others would. His knowledge of human nature was limited, but it was broad enough to tell him that his praises sung by others would be far more effective than if sung by himself.

That she would be pleased he felt assured, for she would understand how well he loved her and how more ready he was than any one else on earth to stand up in her defense. Then, too, she would realize that he was not the contemptible coward she had thought him, and because of which she had spoken of him and to him in such harsh terms. Perhaps she would even speak words of praise for his conduct, and perhaps—oh, happy thought!—she might put her arms about his neck and kiss him. That would be a reward indeed, and for such a reward he would be willing to fight the whole world.

Fond, sweet hope! But how many of our most precious hopes are born only to perish with their first breath of life!

When Sim reached home, he found the house dark and Louisa in bed. He went in and struck a light and prepared to retire. His wife was asleep, and he moved about noiselessly so as not to wake her. His eye fell on a scrap of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically he took it up and glanced at the writing it bore. Instantly he sat up and read it eagerly through. Then, puzzled and mystified, he read it again and again. "These were the words the paper contained:

"One-Joe of Ayer's Pills cured my dyspepsia. I. D. Caldwell, Myrtle, Md. Jan. 12, 1899. Bath, Vt."

"They all looked up in astonishment, and there was Sim Banks standing among them, his eyes ablaze with anger and his form trembling with suppressed rage."

"Jim Thorn," he repeated, "you are

blar, a dirty, cowardly, miserable, sneakin blar, an you'll take back them words, or I'll kick your head clean down your throat!"

Thorn sprang to his feet and started to run, but in an instant Sim had hold of his collar with one hand and with the other had given him a blow on the side of the head that sent him to the floor limp as a rag. Sim would have followed him in his advantage and pounded Thorn unmercifully, but Pap Sampson and the rest interfered, and five or six of them held him while the others got Thorn away.

After it was all over and Sim had been released they stood about him for some time, looking at him in silence and with kind words. To them he had suddenly become a new man, and they felt that they did not know him. It was Hicks who broke the pause.

"Why, Sim," he said, "what's come over you? Who'd 'a ever dreamt of you doin such a thing as that?"

"I don't know nothin 'bout it, but I see you ain't nothin 'bout Loney's then," Sim replied, not exactly in line with Hicks' questions. "I'll hit him ag'in if he dast to say sich another thing, an I'll hit anybody else that does it, an I'll hit you, too."

"Well, that's all right, Sim, but you jest calm down now. Jim Thorn, you the only one that said anything, an you've done hit him, so thar ain't no more to do, an you'd jest as well git wick."

"My land, Sim, you shore hit him a good un!" Jason said. "I never see a purrier lick struck in all my life."

"An it was all done so quick," another observed. "Why, them words wasn't much more'n outen Jim Thorn's mouth till Sim was a-standin up here an sayin, 'Jim Thorn, you are a liar!'"

"Just that a-way. Then Jim starts to run an afore I knowed it Sim had gathered him by the collar an give him the lick."

"An wasn't it a lick, though?" Jason said. "Why, say, it jest kivered Jim over thar so quick that I bet he never knowed what done it."

"I bet he didn't know nothin touched him—jest flopped down thar for all the world like a shot hog. Didn't 'low it was in you to hit a feller like that, Sim."

"Lord, I reckon Sim never knowed it neither," Pap Sampson said, "but he knows it now, an you all better look out. No matter how harmless a dog is while he's asleep, he may be the worst kind of a dog when you wake him up. An it shorely ain't no mistake."

"An you'd all better not foot with him if you don't want to git hurt," Hicks added.

"You'd all better not say nothin 'bout Loney's," Sim said. "Lesh'n you all wants to git your heads punched."

"Guess nobody hain't got to say nothin 'bout Loney's," Pap Sampson replied, "so you moughtn't well quit a throwin that at us. Jim Thorn had no business to speak the word he did, even if it had been a true word, an I most know it wasn't, an you done right an nat'ral to take it up. I'm a peaceable man myself, as you uns all know, an I ain't got no use for no private life an up in no fursin an that I ain't never hit nobody in all my life, but you jest let some feller say a single word ag'in my woman, an if the fur don't fly it won't be my fault. Them's my sentiments ever time, an I ain't a-keerin who knows 'em."

"Suppose Sim done right," another said, with that ready sympathy people are apt to feel for the victor as against the vanquished. "I'd a done jest like him if I'd 'a been in his place, only I bet I'd 'a laid Jim Thorn out so's he moughtn't 'a got up no more for a month."

"By granny," said another. "I 'low Jim got of pow'ful easy myself! It were a good thing it wasn't me he had to deal with."

"An you can let your hide it be moughtly fortunate for him," remarked a third, "that it wasn't me."

Pap Sampson thumped his cane against the door and laughed.

"You uns are all a-talkin pow'ful big," he said, "but you uns better not get no idee that Jim Thorn ain't dead yet. 'Taint nothin to go foolin round a nule's heels 'less you got business thar."

As Sim Banks walked home that night he felt greatly elated, and in his soul there was a kind of feeling closely akin to intoxication. He stood erect, with a bearing proud and disdainful, his head held well up and walked with a step firm and confident.

In knocking Jim Thorn down the way he did he had demonstrated to his neighbors that he was not so much a coward as they had supposed. That within itself was a great deal to be proud of, for he felt that in removing the stain of cowardice from his name, he had raised an almost insupportable burden from his soul. But that was not all nor yet the chief use of his elation.

Louisa would learn what he had done, and she would know that he had done it for her sake. He would not tell her, but others would. His knowledge of human nature was limited, but it was broad enough to tell him that his praises sung by others would be far more effective than if sung by himself.

That she would be pleased he felt assured, for she would understand how well he loved her and how more ready he was than any one else on earth to stand up in her defense. Then, too, she would realize that he was not the contemptible coward she had thought him, and because of which she had spoken of him and to him in such harsh terms. Perhaps she would even speak words of praise for his conduct, and perhaps—oh, happy thought!—she might put her arms about his neck and kiss him. That would be a reward indeed, and for such a reward he would be willing to fight the whole world.

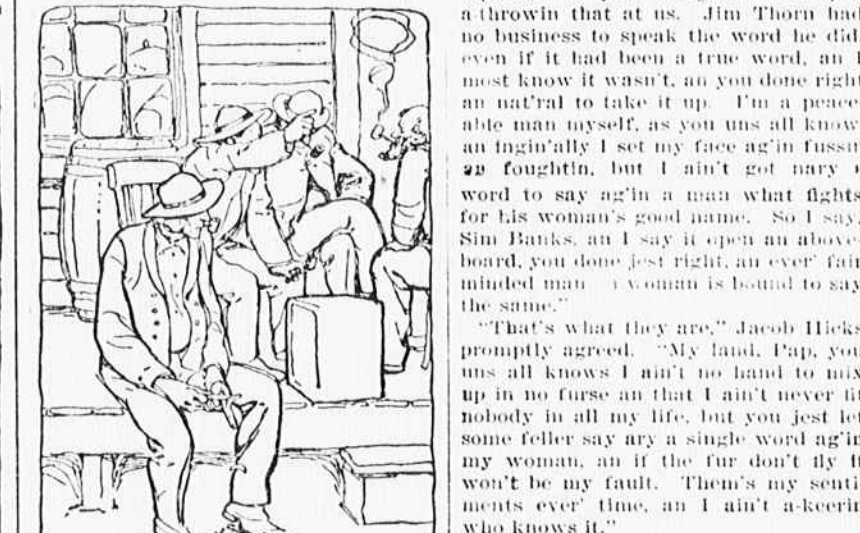
Fond, sweet hope! But how many of our most precious hopes are born only to perish with their first breath of life!

When Sim reached home, he found the house dark and Louisa in bed. He went in and struck a light and prepared to retire. His wife was asleep, and he moved about noiselessly so as not to wake her. His eye fell on a scrap of paper lying on the floor. Mechanically he took it up and glanced at the writing it bore. Instantly he sat up and read it eagerly through. Then, puzzled and mystified, he read it again and again. "These were the words the paper contained:

"One-Joe of Ayer's Pills cured my dyspepsia. I. D. Caldwell, Myrtle, Md. Jan. 12, 1899. Bath, Vt."

"They all looked up in astonishment, and there was Sim Banks standing among them, his eyes ablaze with anger and his form trembling with suppressed rage."

"Jim Thorn," he repeated, "you are



blar, a dirty, cowardly, miserable, sneakin blar, an you'll take back them words, or I'll kick your head clean down your throat!"

Thorn sprang to his feet and started to run, but in an instant Sim had hold of his collar with one hand and with the other had given him a blow on the side of the head that sent him to the floor limp as a rag. Sim would have