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The Gate That Won Jane

How It Opened the Way For Their Happiness.

By MARY G. BENTLEY.

Farmer Tillson hadn't a generous hair in his head. He kept every cent he got and never gave out a cent.

Jane was as open hearted as Tillson was close. She was the life of the young farmer people round about, and not one of them but loved her. Her uncle did all he could to impress her with the fact that, having some capital, she should look upon marriage as a sort of partnership in which her partner should furnish an equivalent to her own means.

One day there came to Tillson's farm a young man who asked for work. He was rather intellectual looking than muscular, a fact that did not favorably impress Tillson. But he offered to work for very low wages, and as it was harvest time Tillson employed him.

Now, Jane no sooner saw young Zeke Freeman doing the hardest work there was to be done on the farm, which her uncle put upon the young man, than she pitied him. Fifty being akin to love, she loved him. She was bright enough, however, to keep the situation from her uncle, who never suspected it till Freeman one day went to him to ask for Jane's hand.

"No, ye can't have Jane," snarled old Tillson ungraciously. "She's my brother's daughter an' has money of her own, an' you ain't nothin' but a hired man with no prospects. I don't see what Jane was thinkin' on to say ye could ask me. Ye can't have her, an' that's all there is to it."

Zeke opened his mouth as though to protest or to strengthen his case by further argument, but Tillson's face was grim and forbidding, and he knew the old man too well to weaken his chances by causing useless irritation. He turned away.

That afternoon they were near the farmyard gate, Zeke digging post holes and Old Tillson patching up a wheelbarrow, when the drummer of an agricultural warehouse appeared. But, instead of going straight to Tillson, he stopped at the gate and began to examine it curiously.

"Queer contrivance that," he said presently. "Good idea, though—grand, good idea. How did you happen to think of it?"

"It's some of my hired man's dillydallyin'," replied Tillson gruffly. "He's forever up to something of that sort. Wastes half his time."

Zeke flushed a little, but did not look up.

"No wasted time about that," declared the drummer emphatically. "It's a valuable idea. There's money in it."

"Money?" questioned Tillson eagerly. Then he saw one of the horses squeezing his body through the open doorway of the corncrib and he rushed off. He would have sent Zeke, only he preferred him to continue at the post hole digging.

"So it's your idea, is it?" said the drummer as he crossed to Zeke's side. "Going to have it patented, of course?"

Zeke laughed. "Patented!" he echoed. "That foolish thing? Why, it's nothing but a lot of stones and two hinges placed so the gate will shut of itself."

"But that's just the sort of thing which usually proves valuable," persisted the drummer. "The simpler the device, if it's useful, the better. You'll make a mistake if you don't protect the idea."

"Then I guess I'll make the mistake," said Zeke carelessly. "Patents cost money, and I haven't any. Besides, if I had I wouldn't risk 50 cents on that foolish thing."

The drummer regarded him thoughtfully. "Look here," he said suddenly, "how would you like to make a trade? I could appropriate the idea for myself if I did business that way, but I don't. Still, I like to make money wherever I see a chance. My house does a good deal in patent articles, and I can generally guess pretty close whether there's money in an idea or not. Now, if you say so, I will put this through at my own expense and keep half the profit. What do you say? Suppose we fix this thing now."

He opened a notebook and wrote for some seconds, then tore out the leaf and handed it to Zeke.

"It's a sort of agreement for you to put your name to," he said. "Read it first, though. Never sign anything until you know what it is."

"I will have regular papers made for the both of us," Zeke read the paper and signed his name with the pen which the drummer held ready. Then he resumed his digging. A few moments later Tillson came hurrying back. "The datted horse ate a full peck of good corn," he began wrathfully. "No supper 'll he get this night. Now, what is it 'bout that gate bizness? How's there money in it?"

"By getting the invention patented," answered the drummer carelessly, "but Zeke and I have fixed that up. Well, I must be going."

"But, look here!" exclaimed Tillson. "Ye must talk with me 'bout that gate. It's mine! Zeke ain't nothin' to do with it."

"Oh, I don't want the gate," said the drummer coolly. "It's only the idea, and that, I believe, belongs to Zeke. Goodby."

Tillson stared at him as he walked away, the wrath deepening on his face. Suddenly he swung round to Zeke. "What did ye get?" he demanded. "Come, hand it over."

"I didn't receive anything in money," Zeke answered.

"Stop!" roughly. "Don't tell any yarns. Didn't I hear the man say you an' him fixed it up? Now, how much money did he give ye for my gate? Look at me straight!"

Zeke did so, with a half smile. "He's to pay for getting out a patent," he replied, "and have half what we make."

"An' ye didn't get any money?"

"Not a cent."

Tillson looked at him sharply, but there was no deceit in the straightforward face. Even he realized the fact. "Then yer an idiot!" he snarled. "The man was set on the idea. I could see that from the way he spoke. Ye could have got \$50 or \$100 jest as easy as nothin'. Mebbe he could have made a trade for a lot of his tools. An' now—huh—ye'll never hear from him ag'in."

Zeke did not answer, and presently Tillson went toward the barn grumbling. But his words did not disturb Zeke in the least. He scarcely expected to hear from the man again. Even when the "regular papers" came, with imposing seals and blank places for him to sign his name, he regarded them more as novelties than as anything that would affect his future.

But one day a letter came which caused his eyes to open wide with amazed delight and which after a half hour of hard thinking carried him into the house after his Sunday clothes. It was nearly dark when he returned from the town. Old Tillson met him at the barn door, his face dark.

"What d'ye leave work for without my say so?" he demanded.

"Business," replied Zeke. "I heard you say t'other day the mortgage had run by and that if you did not raise the money soon they'd be selling you out. So I've been to a lawyer and had it fixed over in my name, to save you trouble. You can pay me whenever it suits. You see, in answer to the look on Tillson's face, "I got a check for \$2,000 on the patent and am likely to get as much more every year. I think I'll buy Dickson's big farm that joins ours."

Tillson stood looking at the young man with mouth and eyes wide open. The expression on his face was a study.

"What interest you goin' to charge me?"

"Never mind about the interest. You can pay whatever rate you please or nothing at all."

"Waal, I suppose you've got to be paid suthin'. What is it you want?"

"Jane."

"Oh, that's the pay you're after!"

The moment the old curmudgeon's interest came to the front he was less concerned about that of his niece.

"You and she can settle that, I suppose. As long as she's satisfied I suppose I'll have to be."

Jane was perfectly satisfied, and before long there was a wedding.

But Zeke didn't buy Dickson's farm. He drifted into the employ of a firm engaged in the development of mechanical contrivances and is now a very rich man.

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