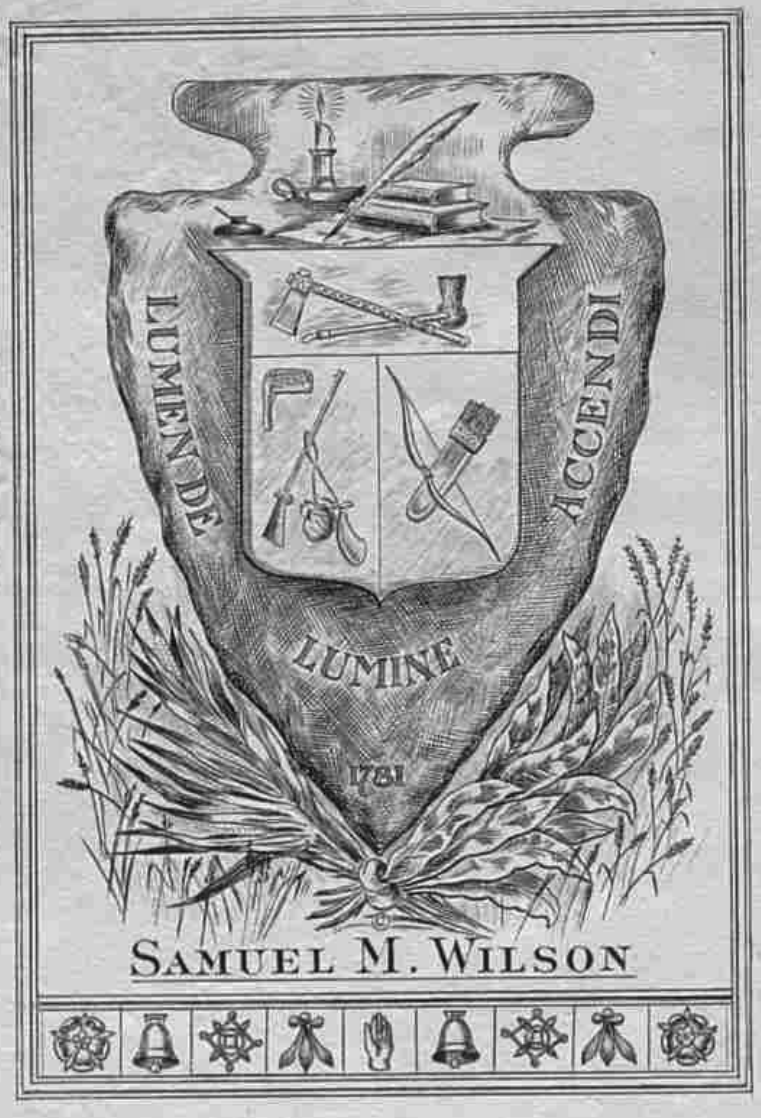
THE WIND-UP OF THE BIG MEETIN'

ON NO BUSINESS.

BARTON.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A Tale of the Cumberland Mountains.

THE

Wind-Up of the Big Meetin'

ON

NO BUS'NESS:

BY

W. E. BARTON.

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TO

MY SISTER

MAY.

THE WIND-UP OF THE BIG MEETIN' ON NO BUS'NESS.

I.

"They will be night meetin' hyur tonight at early candle-lightin', an the meetin' 'll wind up termorrer. At the wind up of the meetin' we'll open the doors of the church an' *bab*tize them candidates that desires fur to be *bab*tized. I reckon this hyur has been norated aready so's every person understans it. An' neow ef all minds is discharged we'll crave the benediction."

So spoke Brother Jeems Albright at the close of the service on Saturday afternoon in the No Bus'ness church-house. All minds seemed to be discharged—whatever that may mean—and the benediction was "craved." Tom Baker and the other young men with him sat near the door and were the first outside, where they joined a larger company of their own age who had not been in, or if in at all had remained but a short time, and returned to watch the horses, preferring the genial society of those who sat around on logs in the woods, to the instruction administered in allopathic doses to those within.

In a more leisurely manner the remainder of the congregation moved out, and for some time remained standing around in knots and inviting each other to go home with them. He who had but one spare bed invited from a dozen to forty guests, and he who lived a mile from the church-house was invited to "go by" with him who lived five. Indeed, each family ran a whole gauntlet of invitations; being invited to go by with almost every other family present, and generally declining and returning the invitation no matter how certain that it would not be accepted.

Slowly the church house disgorged its congregation; and when at last the half-dozen preachers emerged with saddle-bags on their arms, it stood vacant. Not a very stylish edifice, this temple in the backwoods of Kentucky—a mere log pen with a leaky roof, the cracks between the logs daubed with mud and covered on the inside with strips split from logs. The floor was puncheon; the seats were rough, backless affairs with holes bored through for the legs, which projected an inch or more beyond the surface of the bench, making a rather uncomfortable seat for the second person from the end. The older seats were hewn out; and the newer ones were made by driving legs into slabs

from the saw mill. This saw mill, by the way, was a new enterprise, and one that had in a degree revolutionized life on No Bus'ness. It made a variety of unseemly sounds on the hitherto solemnly silent stream, waking with its shrill whistle the angry echoes, which mockingly answered the voice of the unwelcome visitor; and the hills took up the sound and told it to the hills beyond, and these in a fainter voice to hills yet more remote, and hill answered hill until all the woods seemed peopled with strange, weird voices joined in an uncanny chorus of threatening and mocking—enough to have frightened a timid or superstitious saw mill into repentance for its rash intrusion into such a region. But the saw mill held its ground, and day after day puffed and whistled and sputtered away on the lonely stream.

For No Bus'ness is a creek. A legend is current concerning the name, that the first man who ascended the stream returned with the report that "A human haint got no bus'ness up that ar creek." A good many humans, however, subsequently found their way up that ar creek and stayed there. They named the creek's two tributaries respectively "Troublesome" and "Dif*fic*ulty", and the main stream retained its enigmatical appellation, "No Bus'-

ness." It is a rapid mountain torrent, at times almost dry, at others "swimmin'-deep." The number of feet which it can rise in a few hours is something almost incredible, and although the periods of its rampage are as brief as violent, it is looked upon with good reason as a very fickle-minded, treacherous stream.

On either side rise high perpendicular bluffs, between which from the valley below, only a small segment of the sky is visible; and the feeling comes and grows upon one, that the little world along the creek is very much farther from heaven than the tops of the parallel bluffs on either side. What mighty cliffs they are! Three hundred feet of sandstone with a thick stratum of fossiliferous limestone, then sandstone with traces of coal, and the whole surmounted by hard conglomerate, rising in majestic castles and standing out in overhanging masses beyond the softer rock below. A geologist had once visited No Bus'ness. He had hired his board for a week at old 'Lijah Hale's and had roamed up the creek and over the hills in a delight which the open-eyed natives had at first regarded as insane. Later they brought him queer rocks which had been saved by the children as "purties" and asked him if the quartz crystals from geodes were diamonds. They

gathered about him in wonder while he talked of things which they understood as little as Sanskrit; surprised that so great a man should go to such botherment to learn so much about *jest rocks*. But when he showed to the little company which nightly gathered at old 'Lijah's, the fossils he had collected, and talked of the vast ages which had elapsed since these fossils had lived, and told them that the creek had once flowed on top of the bluff and gradually through untold ages worn its bed through the solid rock to its present depression, they attempted to remonstrate with him, and failing to change his opinion pronounced him "a ninfidel," and warned him to leave. Jake Finch was most active in driving him off, combining business with pleasure, and his anxiety for the public welfare with the redress of an injury which he had suffered in his feelings by reason of a rebuke administered by said geologist.

"He treated me mighty abrupt," said Jake. "He come up an' went to sorter nosin' around over my farm, an' thinks me I'll jes' sorter go long, sez I, kase theys a lead mind somers on my farm that the Injuns used ter run bullets from, 'n' ef he finds 'er, sez I, I want to be somers round, sez I; 'n' I've heard tell of that ar Swift

silver mind roun' hyur or over in Whitley, one, an' thinks me, mebbe she's hyur. An' we come down by the branch whar we het the rocks at, fur to drap in the bar'l fur to bile the water fur to scald hogs, 'n' ee picked up a piece of a rock what had busted wen I drapped her into the water. Hit war a powerful curus rock—hit war plum round an' sorter holler on both sides, sorter like a deesh. I 'member sorter noticin' of it wen I picked 'er up, an' a thinkin' I'd take 'er home fur the chaps to play with fur 'em a purty, or to hole the shetter to the door open, but I jest 'lowed twarnt while to tote her up to the house, kase one of the heenges to the door is broke an' I haint got round to cut me a with fur to make another one 'n' so the shetter to the door sorter stays open '*thout* nuthin fur ter hold 'er. An' thinks me, I've got ye picked up now, 'n' ef I drap ye I'll jes' hatter pick up 'nother, so in ye go, sez I. An wen she got hot an' I drapped 'er inter the water she busted. Wal, ef twarnt a plum sight in the world to see that feller wen he found it. He acted like he'd cry. He said hit war a sorter mill fur ter grin' corn that some ole feller—a Injun or some ole coot—hed sorter made him fur to grind him his grist. An' wen I tole the feller 'bout me a-fin'in' it an' how come 'er broke, he got plum cat-

awampus. 'Warn't they rocks 'nuff 'roun' thout you a takin' that air un?' sez ee. Sez I, 'You needn't afeel so bad,' sez I. 'They grind of a Saturday down to the saw mill, an' ole Preacher Jake Watts he's got him a water mill up on Bull Creek and grin's wen theys a fraish in the creek, an' ole Tom Giles up on the back-bone has got him a hit-'em-agin fur dry weather 'th a hole burnt out of a hick'ry stump an' a sweep sorter lack a well sweep 'th a iron waige in the eend of it fur to jerk down 'th a rope an' keep a hittin' twell she's gits sorter fine,' sez I. 'Theys mills nuff, sez I, ef you've got any grin'in', sez I, 'thout awantin' ye any sich a audashus ole rig as thet ar,' sez I. 'Peared like that ort ter a pacified him, but hit made him madder. 'Ef you'd a knowd as much,' sez ee, 'ez the man wut made that ar mortar,' sez ee, 'you'd a knowd mor'n to a busted 'er wen they warnt no need fur it,' sezee. An' I sorter got a leetle ashy an' sez I, 'You dag-gonned ole infidel,' sez I, 'wut d'ye mean?' sez I. 'You acomin' 'round hyur a smashin' rocks an' a huntin' ye up ole holler rocks,' sez I, 'fur yer wife ter grind 'er corn,' sez I, 'stidder you a stay-in' to hum an' a totin hit to mill fur 'er,' sez I, 'Dag-gon yer dog-gonned pictur! You git out o' hyur! an' clar out orfum thishyur branch,' sez

I, 'we haint got no use fur a ninfidel,' sez I. 'Go home 'n' crack corn 'th that ar hammer o' yourn ef you want a mill,' sez I, 'dag-gon your dag-gonned skin! You git out o' hyur!—Git 'n' stay got! or I'll git me a bresh and give ye a ginteel good linten,' sez I."

Jake repeated this conversation to each family on the creek, adding to his own speech, and increasing the number of maledictions with each recitation, and growing more and more abusive as the intelligence that the geologist had "sure gone" became more evidently true. And all the people said Amen, and whatever may be said of "humans" in general, it is certainly true that a geologist "haint got no bus'-ness up that ar creek" even unto this day. The horrified and injured feeling with which the visit of that "infidel" is remembered will never be entirely removed. Even the discovery that the mill hands, who came from Indiana, believed the earth round, produced far less commotion.

During this long, tedious digression, the people whom we left in front of the church-house when "meetin' broke," have about completed their preparations for departure. All the acceptable invitations have been accepted, but the form of inviting will be kept up as long as two families are together.

"Go by, Dick, you'n your ole woman."

"No, caint, I reckon. You all go up 'ith me."

"We would, but we caint leave handy; you all best stay over to night meetin'."

"No, I reckon not. We lef' the chaps alone."

"O, Marthy's big nuff ter look atter them—you best stop over."

"No, I reckon we caint this time."

"Well, wy don't you never come an' bring the children an' set with us a spell. 'Pears like you've forsook us hyur."

"No, we haint forsook ye. We're 'bout ter move down 'n' live off o' you alls. We'll git back ter meetin' termorrer."

"Good bye, then, ef nuthin' else won't do ye."

"Good bye."

A few of those who live at a distance have decided to go by with those who live nearer. Two of the preachers and a half-dozen of the visitors from the head waters of Troublesome and Dif*fic*ulty went home with Elijah Hale. And Tom Baker went, also. He is the most important man in this story, not even excepting Brethren Jeems Albright and Ab Duncan, the two preachers whom you see yonder, with saddle-bags behind them, on their lank steeds threading the serpentine road down the point to Elijah Hale's.

Old 'Lijah Hale was one of the most prosperous men on No Bus'ness. The narrow valley widened a few yards at his farm, and the hill rose a little less perpendicularly, enabling him to "make a crap" on its slope. There was corn in his log crib until corn came again, and plenty of bacon in his smoke house—excepting in those years when the mast was light, when he may perhaps have run a little short of that greasy but staple commodity. He was looked up to as a man of influence in both church and state, being an influential member of the church, and a Justice of the Peace. The shelf nailed to the beams above the door in his house contained "the marster sight o' books mighty nigh ever you seed"—leather bound books, entitled "Acts" and "Statutes," "Property of the State of Kentucky." 'Lijah always brought them out when he had a case to try, but never read any from them, though he sometimes looked vaguely through them under pretense of hunting up the law. His verdicts were peculiar to himself, the following being a specimen:—

"Wall, I've been a huntin' up the law, an' hit don't kiver this case, 'pears like—eenahow hit don't hit the case center, p'int blank, the way hit had oughter—but jist atakin' a sorter common sense view of the case, hit 'pears like ter

me that Rube hadn't oughter a hit Bob, an' Bob he hadn't oughter a cussed Rube. An' I reckon I best not find nary one 'o yer an' each feller kin pay their own costis," which decision was accepted by all parties as both legal and just.

Old 'Lijah had a numerous progeny. Three or four of his oldest children were married, and the ages of the others tapered regularly down to Ben, aged eight, and Juley Ann, a spoiled little miss of about six summers, and one additional autumn and winter. The oldest children left at home were Lindy, aged seventeen, and Thaddeus who was not quite sixteen—a big awkward fellow whom every one called "Thad" except on state occasions, when his father called him Thaddea.

Lindy is a rosy, rather buxom miss. She can ride a horse well as you notice, for Tom has brought her horse and his around to the three sections of unequal length cut from the end of a log, upended so as to form a series of steps from which a lady can mount—known as stile-blocks—and Lindy sits erect in her saddle and shows herself at ease there. She does not often ride to church, her father and mother using Old 'Lijah's two horses, but her mother stayed at home today to arrange for the meeting tomorrow, so Lindy rides her mother's

horse. Her movements on the ground are hardly graceful. Her step is not light, for her shoes are heavy, and she walks chiefly to get around. But on a horse she appears at her best. So look well at her as she starts off with Tom Baker somewhat bashfully riding beside her, for Lindy makes her best appearance now, and she is worthy of whatever there may be favorable in your first impression of her.

Her accomplishments are of rather a practical sort. She can kill and dress a chicken, make biscuit and corn bread, spin somewhat and weave a little. She can figure part way through fractions, read in the fourth reader and spell over to "luminary" in the "old blueback."

The fact shall not be concealed from you, that Lindy's parents looked upon her high education as unnecessary, and felt that they had performed a work of supererrogation if not a positive wrong in sending her to school so much. There was some excuse for them, to be sure, for the schoolhouse was so near and Lindy liked to go so well that they could hardly find it in their hearts to keep her away, but they had felt no little anxiety as to the result of so liberal an education upon a girl; and their alarm had been increased this last session by her request for a grammar and a "g'og'ify."

"Hit taint right, 'cordin' to my way o' thinkin', to be a spendin' sich a heap o' money fur to buy gals a hull passel o' books 'bout all them ar things as gals haint no call fur to know," her father said. "You've got nuff o' books now ef you'll read 'em, fur all the use you'll have fur books. All thisyur education haint no 'count fur gals. Better educate 'em fur to be pore men's wives."

So Lindy's appropriation bill was promptly vetoed.

The procession that went down the creek halted for a few moments before the post-and-railing in front of 'Lijah Hale's cabin.

"All 'light an' go in," said 'Lijah. "Thaddea, you strip them beastis an' take 'em out an' give 'em a couple o' bundles o' fodder 'n' a leetle grain o' corn apiece. Turn Bill 'n' ole Balley inter the lot, 'n' I reckon you kin stan' that gray with Brother Jinkinses nag. Yer hoss won't kick will he, Brother Jinkins? Fetch them saddles inside whur them calves won't chaw 'em all up. Jes' walk inside. Bill, you all best stop in, too. Gi' down, Jim, an' stop over. Wall, get along hum then an' git ye a snack. Hit won't be long twill night meetin'. Come in, come in. Jinny, jes you run ter the spring an' fetch a fraish bucket o' water. You'll hev ter take a

gourd, the one at the spring is broke. Jim fetch us some cheers out hyur. Put yerself level on a cheer, Brother Duncan. Se' down, Brother Albright. Brother Jinkins take a cheer an' se' down. Ole woman! got supper mos' ready? We're gittin' sorter nibbly at the craw. Se' down, gentlemen. The ole woman 'll hev us a snack ready right soon now, I reckon. Hev water? Yes, mighty good water. Haint no better nowhurs, I reckon. Now, Jinny, you run 'long 'n' holp yer maw—Lindy 'pears ter be slow 'bout gittin' in."

II.

Lindy did appear to be slow this evening. She and Tom had lagged a little behind the party, an unusual thing for a mountain couple to do; but Tom "had been a talkin' to Lindy a right smart little bit now," and the affair was considered settled by the No Bus'ness gossips. But it wasn't settled. Both Tom and Lindy considered it as good as settled, and both were anxious to have it settled. The courtship had progressed slowly, though pleasantly. Tom had walked home from meetings with Lindy many times, keeping with the crowd. When they had arrived at the house, Lindy had gone inside with the women, and Tom had sat outside on the porch, with the men until it was time for him to leave. In short, it had been an orthodox mountain courtship, with nothing to ruffle the even current of true love, until No Bus'ness was stirred by this big meeting. And Li ndy's mother had disturbed matters a trifle.

Lindy's mother had no particular objection to this match. Indeed, she favored it; but like many good women, she could not let a court-

ship work out its own solution without a desire to make her influence felt in some capacity. She had had no hand in making the match, and could not afford to assent to it too readily. She whined often about being left alone, and complained of Lindy's ingratitude and Jinny's inexperience—the theme affording an excellent opportunity to find fault with both girls at once. Lindy paid little attention to these complaints. She understood her mother's natural tendency to "mean Yes and say No." But now her objections assumed a different phase. Lindy had been to the mourners' bench in the meetings and was to join the church tomorrow, and her mother felt that she ought to give her some good advice, and was absolutely unable to give advice for the future without some complaint about the present. Mrs. Hale was a woman who had "seed a heap o' trouble," as she often affirmed with a doleful voice and a significant shake of the head, and she succeeded tolerably well in making others share her troubles with her.

"Thishyur is a world o' trouble," she frequently said, *apropos* of anything whatever or of nothing at all, as she removed her short pipe and spat into the ashes, "an' they haint no use inyer tryin' ter git away from it." And to Mrs.

Hale's credit and consistency be it said that she made no effort to escape trouble, but yielded without a struggle to the inevitable, took gratefully all the trouble that came to her, and hunted up all that she could find in addition.

She took a morbid delight in it. She always visited a sick-bed and kept the details fresh in mind to compare with those of any like occasion, or to reproduce at the funeral six months or a year after the death of the patient. She herself had "indigestion of the stummick" and "a hurtin' in her breast" and "a misery in her back" and a host of other cheerful infirmities whose symptoms she detailed with scrupulous exactness to every listener. It will be readily understood that this estimable lady whined and found fault with the best of intentions, but not always the best of results.

"Hit 'pears like ter me," she said to Lindy, "as how gals that's been for'ard in meetin' and is gwine to be *bab*tized and ter jine the church, hadn't ort to be agaddin 'roun' the kentry 'th young fellows as haint got religion."

Lindy made no reply but had thought of the same thing; and her mother's words had more effect than was expected or desired.

"The Bible's mighty plain 'bout all sich as

that air," her mother continued, after a pause during which she had been using her apron for a handkerchief, "'bout bein' onekilly yoked together 'th them as haint a pullin' the way you're agwine. *I* allers thought ef anybody's agwine ter perfess anything, let 'em live up to it, or not perfess it, *one*." Having thus spoken, she filled her pipe, scooped it into the ashes for a coal, patted the red ember with her toughened forefinger, and smoked in silence, feeling that she had delivered her own soul and done something toward saving Lindy's, but without a thought that Lindy would heed her words.

Lindy, however, dwelt upon her mother's speech until she was very unhappy, and in this frame of mind had gone to meeting this Saturday afternoon. The burden was heavier than ever when she started homeward. A song which had been sung this afternoon kept running through her mind; every motion of herself and horse kept time to its rythm—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne
And worship only Thee."

Was Tom an idol? Was he likely to come between her and God? Her mother's words, her own feelings and the half superstitious in-

clination to regard this hymn, sung at a time so appropriate, as a revelation, perplexed her sorely. Another thing, too, had happened. Brother Ab Duncan in his "sarmint" had said:—

"Ef yer 'spect ter be a Christian yer gotter give up everything that haint Christian. I like ter see religion that's like a ole woman's fat-gourd. The grease is inside, but ye kin see hit a sloppin' all over the surface. Ef you've a takin' to a gal an' a studyin' 'bout amarryin' her, an' she's a trifler, or a fiddler, or a dancer, you've just gotter choose atwix her 'n' God. You haint got no more use for a wife nohow 'n' a hoss has got fur horns."

Tom was neither a trifler nor a fiddler nor a dancer, but a quiet, sober young man; but he was not a Christian, and brother Duncan's remarks seemed to bear directly on the case in hand. Lindy's duty began to seem plain to her. Only her own wicked heart had kept her from seeing it before. Every thought that her duty might admit of another course was stifled as a suggestion of the tempter, and as evidence of her own wickedness; and with a desperate struggle, Lindy determined to dethrone her idol.

Half the short ride home was accomplished before either spoke; then Tom said:

"So yer goin' ter be *bab*tized termorrer, be ye, Lindy?" And Lindy said "Yes."

"Be ye goin' ter jine Albright or Duncan?" Lindy didn't know no difference.

"I wouldn't jine Duncan, nohow," said Tom. "I'll be dad-burned if I like so much '*High-ah! an' a Brother-ah!*'" which remark tended to confirm Lindy's decision, for she regarded it as evidence of Tom's totally unregenerate mind.

Tom was uneasy. No words concerning marriage had ever passed between himself and Lindy, yet he had believed the wedding a matter near at hand. His affection naturally stuck in his throat and did not manifest itself in words, yet he loved Lindy with all his big, bashful heart, and rejoiced in unmistakable evidence that his affection was reciprocated. During this meeting he had felt a growing uneasiness. Lindy had gone early to the mourners' bench, and since had seemed to be slipping away from him. Tom desired to be a Christian, but in spite of his training he found more in the meeting to repel than to attract him. He was disgusted with the excesses of the mourners and the senseless howling of the preachers, notwithstanding their evident sincerity. "Looks like hits a mighty pore way to git religion," he said to himself, "but I don't know ary

nother." So he had not followed Lindy to the mourners' bench, and had felt a sort of jealousy that Lindy should have gone without him. This afternoon she seemed farther from him than ever, and Tom rashly determined to secure her before she escaped him. The house was in sight before he spoke:

"Lindy—when—when—er—how soon d'ye reckon we best to get married?"

Lindy hesitated a moment, looked away from Tom and said desperately, "I don't guess we had best to git married a tall."

Although Tom had felt a sort of premonition warning him of his rejection, and something within him said, "Just as I expected," he was stunned beyond the power of speech. Just as they reached the gate he said, "Lindy, you—you don' mean that ar?"

"Don' talk ter me," she replied, "I cain't stan' it."

"Come in Tom, you an' Lindy," called 'Lijah from the porch. "Jes' hitch yer beastes to the post-an'-railin'. Thad'll cyarry 'em out to the barn, an' you all come in" But Tom, having allowed Lindy to dismount on the stile-blocks, took her horse and his own to the barn. He took a little time to think over his condition, and for the time inclined to a hopeful view.

"Lindy's a mighty fine gal," he soliloquized, "but she's mighty feisty by spells. Suthin' 'r nuther has got her to feelin' brickety, an' she's just a *devilin' me for a spell. Or mebby now when she's jest got religion she don't want to be pestered till atter the wind up of the meetin'."

Having given himself as much comfort as the circumstances permitted, he went to the porch.

"Whar be ye gwine fur to hold meetin' at atter the final wind up hyur?" asked Brother Jinkins of Brother Albright.

"Over on the head waters of Hiwassy," was the reply.

"Wull, that's agittin' up mighty nigh to whur nothin' empties inter nowhur, haint it? Ole Bill Toosper over on Red Bird uster tell a tale 'bout a preacher that went over in thar, an' ee liked flour-bread powerful good, and ee'd hearn tell as how they didn't make none up thar, 'n' ee got 'is ole woman fur ter bake him a hull passel o' biskits, an' ee filled his saddle-pockets with 'em. An' wen ee got ter his pintmaint ter whar ee stayed all night at, he tuck him out a biskit, an' one of the leetle fellers thar was sorter watchin' on 'im and seed 'im, an' th' ole

*Devil, as here used, means to tease.

feller jes' gin 'im a biskit, an' the leetle chap he didn't know wut she was. An' ee showed hit to the tother leetle fellers an' they had a powerful big pow-wow fur to fine out wut hit war. An' finally the way hit eended one on 'em tuck the biskit an' laid hit on the haith, an' ee putt a coal on 'er, an' ee sez, sezee, *'I 'll show ye wut 'tis. Hits a tarrypin; now you watch 'im 'n' you'll see 'im poke 'is laigs out.'*"

"Wull, hit must a bin over in thar ole Zeke Sanders went that time w'en he went off 'th the hog-drove—that time w'en they axed 'im w'en he come back whar ee'd bin at, an' ee said ee didn't know. "I dunno nuthin' 'bout it,' sezee, 'only I know I've bin to whar they call "*sop*," "*gravy*.'"

The speaker laughed loudly at this threadbare tale, as did his audience, most of whom had heard it often before.

"Wull, did ye see Ole Zeke Sanderses Sam thar today? His pap 'n' his uncle Bill is trustees up in that ar Parch Corn deestrick, an' he's a keepin' the school up ou thet ar branch, an' he's bin a buyin' hisself a hull passel o' store clo'es. Did ye see him in that stake-'n'-ridered collar an' them tight britches? I'll be doggonned ef he didn't look right comic."

"Ya-as, haint hit a plum sight wut a heap of

sich critters a feller *kin* see, wen he haint got no gun?"

This last was from Tom and raised a prolonged laugh. Tom wasted little affection on little Sam Sanders.

"I've heerd," suggested 'Lijah, "that the Methodis' war a cavortin' roun' powerful over on Hiwassy."

"Who war a tellin' ye?" asked Brother Albright.

"Wy, some one war a sayin' down to the blacksmith shop—hit war old Preacher Jake Watts or Tom Jeff Mitchell, one—I disremember which now, but pears like hit war ole man Watts, he war there a-gittin' him some shoes putt on his nag, an' hit war him or Tom Jeff, one. An' they war a sayin' that a feller by the name o' Hill was a takin' a powerful through an' had a hull house-full a shoutin' to wunct."

"I haint never heerd tell o' no sich preacher," said Brother Albright.

"He haint no preacher," said Duncan. "He haint never been ordained. The presidin' elder over on the Pore Fork conference gin 'im some license fur to exercise in public. I met him wunct wen I had a 'pintmaint on Smoky fur the third Saturday an' Sunday an' he had a 'pintmaint fur the fourth, an' they rule by the

Sundays stidder the Saturdays, an' the month come in of a Sunday an' so we conflicted. An' he wanted fur to divide the time, but sez I, 'We'll leave er to the congregation,' sez I, an' they voted fur to hear him, kase he was sorter new in the kentry. One feller sez, sezee, 'A new broom sweeps clean.' 'Yes,' sez I, 'but that taint wut ails you' sez I, 'the ole un knows too well whar the dirt is,' sez I. 'An' so he preached —he didn't preach none, but he tried—an' I stayed fur ter hear him, an' he called on me fur ter pray. An' sez I, 'I'll pray in my own meetin's. You go on with yer own sherackety,' sez I."

The conversation dropped for a while; then old 'Lijah remarked, "We had a right good meetin' this evenin'," but before any reply was made, and while Brother Duncan was leaning forward in his chair and puckering his lips preparatory to ejecting a mouthful of tobacco-juice beyond the edge of the porch, after which he probably would have spoken, supper was announced, and further conversation postponed. The men adjourned to supper, the women all waiting until the second table.

"Make a beginnin', Brother Albright," said 'Lijah, and Brother Albright returned thanks.

Then the biscuit was passed, and the chicken,

and the bacon and the corn pones, the tops of which bore three well-defined ridges corresponding to the depressions between Mrs. Hale's fingers. Strong coffee was served, flavored with "long-sweetinin'". The latter, having been passed, was set too close to Benny, who reached it and began to lick off what was draining down the outside of the tin cup.

"Benny!" called his mother, "you quit lickin' off them molasses! Lookee hyur! ef you don' behave an' ac' right you'll hev ter go way from the table! Hev milk, Brother Jinkins,—sweet milk ur buttermilk? Jinny, pour some buttermilk. He don't like to wait, Benny don't. He alers stan's thar right aside of his pap's cheer. He's a mighty feller fur his pap, Benny is."

Mrs. Hale was rather proud than otherwise of Benny's method of helping himself, inasmuch as the offense combined with her rebuke attracted general attention to him. Benny understood it and smiled sweetly, licking from his lips the molasses he had not succeeded in swallowing, and listening to the comments that followed.

"He's a mighty peart boy," said Brother Duncan.

"He's a mighty bad un," said his mother.

"He will come to the table an' stan' aside of his pap; an he don' know how ter ac', 'pears like. He's alers bin a mighty pappy-boy. Hev pie, Brother Duncan? Lindy, han' thet pie."

Lindy laid down her paw-paw fly brush and passed the "high pie," composed of alternate layers of biscuit dough, and apple sauce cooked in grease. The pie was freely partaken of, and the meal was finished in silence. Each man, as he finished, rose from the table and returned to the porch, seizing the opportunity as he stooped to pass through the low door into the "other house," to draw the back of his hand across his mouth; his hand and mouth being nearer together at that moment than usual, the act was performed with the minimum expenditure of labor.

"We had a right good meetin'," said 'Lijah, taking up the conversation where it had been dropped.

"Yas, hit was a powerful good meetin'," said Brother Duncan.

"Bill Smith come for'ard," said Brother Jinkins. "D'ye reckon he'll hold out?"

"I dunno," said Brother Duncan. "He tuck it too easy. Now, Joe Bates, he jes' go' down an' rolled on the floor an' yelled fur mercy, an wan't noways p'tic'lar *how* much dirt they war

whar he rolled. *Thet* looked more like bus'-ness."

"Tom, hits 'bout time for *you* to make a break, hain't it?" asked 'Lijah.

"I reckon 'tis," said Tom, "but 'pears like I isn't ready."

"You had best ter *git* ready," said Brother Albright. "Ef you'd a started at the fust, you mought a been out by this time."

Tom made no reply, and Brother Duncan attempted to clinch the matter by asking as he whittled a chew from a twist of home made tobacco with a large Barlow knife, "D'ye want to go down to thet pit that we tole the people about this evenin'?" And again Tom was silent.

Pipes were produced, and each man, after filling, entered the kitchen for a coal and returned to the porch for a smoke. The sun was almost down, and the moon was rising over the point at the bend of the creek. Soon they knocked the ashes from their pipes, and started for night meeting, all on foot but Tom, who was not to return, it being thought easier by the others to walk than to put out the horses on their late return. Lindy and her mother and Jinny stayed at home, the girls to do up the work and their mother to guard her health.

"I caint never go out none of a night," the latter said, "hit jest sets my bones ter achin' the wust way in the world. I've alers bin a mighty hand to go to church an' ter meetins' an' funerals. Thet's the way I war raised. Jist atter the war I went to one meetin' over on Gum Fork, day an' night fur three weeks, han' runnin'. Ole Brother Jim Perkins preached, an' babtized over forty in Skull Bone, whar hit empties inter the Gum Fork. He died eight year from the next spring. He had the phthisic mighty bad. I've heered him preach when hit 'peared like he couldn't git no breath; fust preach a spell, then wheeze a spell, then preach a spell 'n' then wheeze a spell, twill he got sorter warmed through, an' then laws a massy! how he *cud* preach! 'Peared lack the shingles 'ud fly orfum the roof. But sence the time I had the fever seven year ago fodder-pullin' time, an' ole Doctor Sam Perry gin me so much calomile an' sali*va*ted me, I've bin just ruined fur goin' out of a night. I tell ye, I like these yer yarb doctors—them's *my* doctors. Wy, Doctor Bill Skinner, from the head o' Smoky, he gin Sally Ann Bailey calomile, an' I seed him when he done it, too, an' I *thought* he war a givin' her too much; but I never said nothin', and he gin that girl calo-

mile—she was just a turnin' sixteen, an' had the dip*ther*y—an' he gin her—"

How long Mrs. Hale would have continued, no man knows, but at this point her hearers started for night meeting, and her story closed abruptly.

Off the procession started, the preachers with their saddle-bags, 'Lijah with a little brass lamp, and Tom, in spite of the comfort he tried to force upon himself, with a heavy heart.

III.

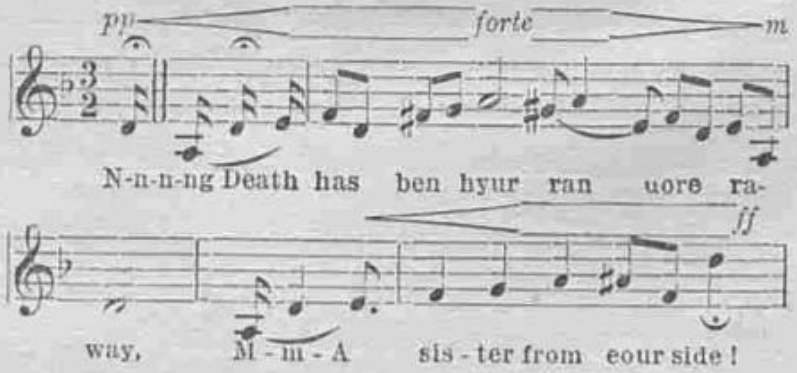
The dishes were washed, the preparations for morning completed, and Lindy went to bed. The beds, six in number, were in two rooms, partially separated by the large double chimney. The space on one side was open; on the other it was closed by a partition, and a ladder stood there, by means of which the smaller children ascended to bed in the loft; for there they were to sleep to-night, to make room below for the guests. Lindy did not find it easy to get to sleep. She thought of Tom. What would he do now? Had she done right? If not, what ought she to have done? These and like questions troubled her as she lay awake and thought. She tried to think of other things—of the meeting to-morrow, what she should say when asked to tell her experience, whether she would choke in the water, whether Tom would be there—and then she was back again in the old train of thought.

Then she tried to think of the meeting to-night. She could picture it to herself—the low pole rafters half revealed by the light of

two or three smoking brass lamps, the audience leaning forward with elbows on their knees, the dogs lying in the aisle until disturbed by some later comers and then changing their position to the open space before the rough slab pulpit. She could imagine it all; she could almost see and hear Brother Hopkins as he rose to announce the opening hymn. Brother Hopkins usually did this, for he was not regarded as a very able preacher, and this was an easy way to make him feel that he had been honored with a part in the service. He always produced an antiquated hymn-book and invariably lined the same hymn. Lindy imagined she could hear the alternate lining and singing:

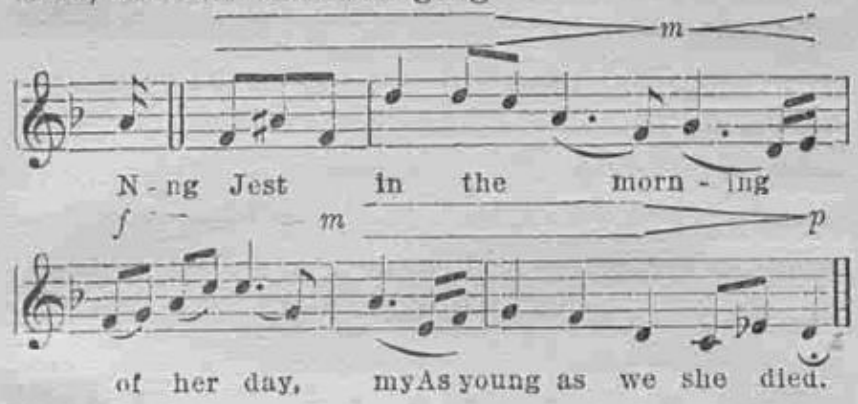
"Death has been hyur and bore away
A sister from eour side,

"Sung to the use of common maisure. All sing:"



"Jest in the morning of 'er day
As young as we she died."

And Lindy could hear the shuffling of feet which accompanied the rising of the congregation, and the voices singing—



"Not long ago she filled her place
And sot with us chew larn."

Thus Lindy followed it through its multitude of stanzas and repeated the last two lines of the last stanza. Then the doleful minor strain adjusted itself to other words, and they started an interminable running through her mind:

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be!"

And she mentally lined the remainder of the stanza and sang that, and then took up a continual Da Capo. She tossed so uneasily on her straw bed that Jinny found it difficult to sleep, and said:

"Wist you cud lay still. 'Pears lack you squirm 'n' twist 'n' wiggle lack er flea on a hot shovel. I caint git to sleep nary wink."

Lindy was still awake when the folks returned from meeting. Old Shep's bark and the terrific uproar of the feist* announced their coming. Both dogs met the company at the gate, making a terrible ado to convince their master that were he any one else they would eat him. The two lank hounds, however, after as noisy a bark as either of their companions, returned to the porch, and quietly slipped with the company into the house.

"Come in all," said old 'Lijah. "Rest your hats on that ar table. Take cheers an' se' down. Jes' pull up that bainch ef they haint cheers 'nuff. I'll hev ter cut a fo' stick an' see ef we caint recruit the far a leetle. Hyur, *Thaddea! Thad!* Them boys! Keeps dogs—fur coon purpisis! Git eout o' hyur, you triflin', no 'count critters! Thad, you keep them dawgs o' yourn eout of thishur chimbly corner. They haint room fur *folks* ter set. Fetch us in a fo' stick hyur an' some o' that ar pine. A far feels mighty good thesyer cold nights. Shet that ar door. Wile we're hot we'll try ter *keep* hot."

Feist, a little dog. Sometimes spelled "fice." But it is always pronounced with a final "t."

Thad brought the fore-stick, and calling the hounds, started on a coon-hunt with some of the boys from up the creek. The fire soon began to burn brightly, and helped to consume the oxygen of the apartment. In most of the houses on No Bus'ness, ventilation was better provided for than almost any other necessity or convenience, but 'Lijah Hale's was thoroughly clinked and daubed, and there were no windows. A breath of outside air would have been a luxury to any lungs unused to such experience; but the company could have slept equally well with the wind blowing onto them through a six inch crack, or in an air-tight box with a whole family and a hot fire. The air in the Hale mansion must have been well de-oxydized by the time each occupant of the six beds—some fifteen persons—had inhaled it, and the fire had burned it for a few consecutive hours; but the Hale family and their guests slept the sleep of the just and lived through the night as usual.

Next morning, breakfast was eaten and preparations for meeting were slowly made. A full hour before meeting time the families from up the creek came by and stopped before the post-and-railing, with—

"Hello!"

"Howdy!" called 'Lijah. "Come in. Gi' down, Jim. Come in, all of you."

"No, we aint got time, I reckon."

"O you've got time a plenty. Come in."

"No, I reckon we best keep a stirrin'. Gwine ter meetin'?"

"Yes, we're agwine up thoreckly. Come in, we'll be ready right soon now."

"Wull—I dunno. Hev yer got any fraish water up?"

"Yes, come in. Hyar, Thad! You run—Thaddea! Whur's Thad at? Hyur, Jinny, you run an' get a fraish bucket o' water right quick. Gi' down 'n' come in 'n' we'll go long up thoreckly."

This dialogue, with some variations, had been repeated at each house since the little procession had started down the creek, receiving like a snowball, continual accretions as it descended. Jinny came with the water, of which all partook, and in a short time the preparations, quickened by the arrival of the folks from up the creek, were completed; and the procession started with its final additions.

Little Johnny Hopkins walked with Lindy and told her about the last night's meeting. Johnny was the son of Brother Hopkins, who usually opened the meetings. He said:—

"Did you ever hyur my pap pray? Wen my pap prays he prays. *Ab Duncan caint preach!* Las' night wen we got home, my pap sez, '*Less pray!*' an' we all go' down on our knees an' the house jes shuck!"

Lindy inferred from this, that Brother Hopkins desired promotion, and that his prayer at home last night had been a sort of private rehearsal for the more conspicuous part he expected to take in today's services.

Soon they came to the church-house, outside which the people were gathered in homogeneous knots. Lindy soon found the group of girls of her own age, and together they started for the spring. On the way back they met some young men, among them Tom; but Tom looked the other way, and Lindy felt guilty.

Tom had ridden after last night's meeting to his home "on the divide atwixt Troublesome and Dif*fic*ulty." As soon as he was alone, the little hope he had clung to forsook him. It was not a mere freak on Lindy's part. Her announcement to him was the result of a positive decision, and he well knew that the little miss had a will so strong that some thought her stubborn. No, it was settled. But why had she refused him? A sudden thought struck him—Sam Sanders.

"Hits that trifling leetle feist," he said to himself savagely. "I knowed he war a sorter hangin' round her, but I *didn't* think she war sech a fool as ter want *him*. I s'pose hits sorter nateral fur a gal to lack nice clo'es, but—. Wul, I dunno as I ort to blame 'er. No, I haint got nothin' to say agin Lindy. Ef she wants Sam Sanders, she kin hev him, I haint a keerin'. She mought better keep a honest heart nor to sling hit away fur a stake-'n'-ridered collar. Wul! A gal that'll talk to a feller as long as she's ben a talkin' to me, an' then slight him fur a leetle, triflin', no 'count critter like *him*, I'll be dog-take-my-cats ef I want her!"

So Tom said to himself, but he never knew how much he loved Lindy until that moment. No matter how strenuously the fox asserts his belief in the acidity of the grapes, his desire for them varies as the square root of their distance beyond his reach.

The conjecture that Sam Sanders was his favored rival, grew more and more certain in Tom's mind, until before morning he had recalled a dozen trivial events which had not for a moment excited his suspicion at the time they occurred; but any one of which would have been enough, in his present state of mind, to convince him.

"Trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmation strong,
As proof of holy writ."

But one thing was settled. He would not stay there to see Lindy married to Sam Sanders. He would leave No Bus'ness. He had been brought up on the little farm on top of the ridge and had never been twenty miles from it.

"The craps is done made," he said to himself, "an' pap kin git along 'thout me. He'll hatter do it sometime. Jes' soon as they comes a fraish in the creek, Dan Walker 'll be a wantin' fur ter float them raftis o' warnut logs down to the river, an' him 'n' me's good friends. I kin git a job ter go 'long down on one on 'em. The moon's mighty nigh full, an' hits a wet moon. They'll be a rain right soon, an' then 'Good bye No Bus'ness.' Theys a heap o' ways to git 'long when a feller gits eout inter the world."

This decision he reached before he slept. In the morning he started back to the church-house, drawn by a desire to see Lindy for the last time. Besides, Dan Walker would be at the meeting.

He found Dan as he had expected, early on the ground and easily made the desired arrangement.

"I reckon hits agwine to rain right soon,"

said Dan. "The wind is south-east, an' ole Rockyface war a roarin' powerful this mornin'. I look for fallin' weather tonight or termorrer, one. Soon's hit begins, we'll git down, an' be ready to shove out with the fraish."

Then they were joined by others and walked to the spring, passing Lindy on the way. Although Tom resolutely looked the other way, his heart beat very fast.

Soon they heard Brother Albright inside, singing in stentorian tones, "Babylon is Fallen," and this signal—church bell and organ voluntary combined—caused the house to be filled.

Some delay followed, for the crowd was too large for the house. The benches were moved out and more were extemporized from blocks and stones with fence rails laid across, and meeting began in earnest.

IV.

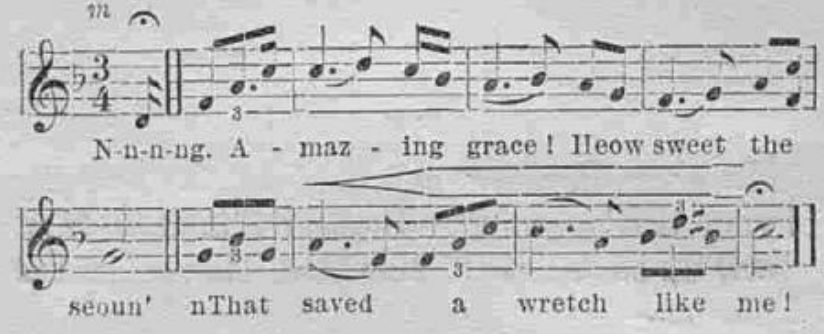
Brother Hopkins did not line the opening hymn this morning. Brother Simmons from "way up eouten Bell" did that. He prefaced as follows:—

"My dear brethering an' friens, an' dyin' congregation, we hev met hyur in this place today on thisher leetle rise o' ground, fur the purpis, ef eour hearts deceive us not, of Divine wuship. Awhilst amany of eour feller beins-ah! as good as *us* by nater an' fai-ai-air *better* by practice-ah! has eout-*stripped* us in the narrer *la-ane* o' life-ah! an' gone to people the pa-a-ale nashins o' the dead-ah! An' hit air meet upon this solemn occasion-ah! thet we shud dro-or *in* the worndrins of eour min's-ah! from *yearth* an' the perishin' *things* of yearth-ha! an' *fix* um upon heaving, an' immortal glory-ah! To wich eend we invite you, my friendly congregation, to sing the beautiful hyme:—

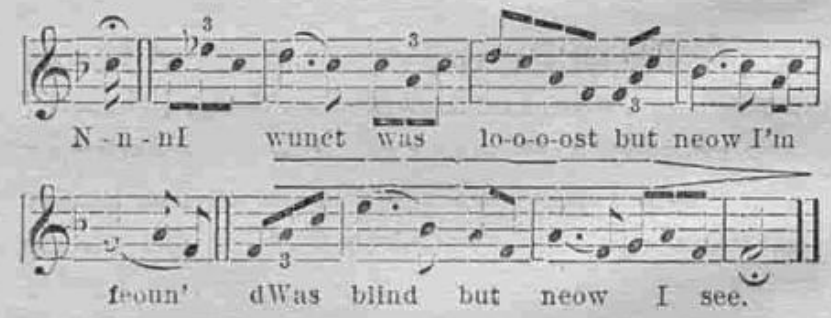
"Amazin' grace heow sweet the seoun'
Thet saved a wretch lack me.

Sung to the use of common maisure. Thank

some brother to pitch an' kerry the chune, an' all the brethering jine in."



"I wunct was lost but neow I'm found,
Was blind but neow I see."



All sang the air except one or two young men, who having learned "to bass," dragged out one long tonic, changing once in each couplet at just the wrong place to a discordant dominant; and one old woman, with a voice like a cracked fife, who squeaked out something like a tenor.

After the "hyme," Brother Hopkins offered prayer, with such effect that one might readily

believe Johnny's statement that "the house jes' shuck." After shouting himself hoarse, he began to draw to a close with the timely remark—

"An' neow, O Lord! as we're not to be *heerd* fur eour much, long or loud speakin'-ah," when his voice sank from a shout to a whisper, in which tone the prayer was finished.

Lindy heard little of the prayer. She knew the latter part of it by heart. She was accustomed to hear prayers which ended in almost the same words, with the same variations of pitch, stress and inflection, and with the drop from the fortissimo to the inaudible on exactly the same word. The tune of "Amazing grace" was running through her mind, and she heard Brother Simmons alternately lining and singing—

"*The dearest idol I have known,*
Whate'er that idol be."

But after the prayer, came another hymn which helped her somewhat, for it was not "sung to the use of common maisure;" and it set to rest for a time the jingle in her brain.

"O sisters, aint you happy, aint you happy in the Lord?
Shout glory, hally, hallyloo!
"Yes, ef ever I was happy, I'm happy in the Lord,
Shout glory, hally, hallyloo!"

Refrain:

"O religion is a fortyin and heaving is a home,
Shout glory, hally, hallyloo!
When we all git to heaving we'll shout together there,
Shout glory, hally, hallyloo!"

Lindy tried to sing, but could not. She was *not* happy. She wondered if the "sisters" were. With a vague feeling of unrest she sat with her head down, trying not to think.

And now Brother Ab Duncan rose to speak, and cast his eyes over his congregation. An interesting one it certainly was. There sat the brethren in rough homespun, some with coats, but more without, with elbows on their knees. Their eyes were sometimes raised to look at the speaker or to gaze behind them—the latter effort being accompanied by a falling of the lower jaw—but generally fixed listlessly on the puddle of tobacco-juice between their feet.

There were the women in their linsey-woolsey dresses. Some were using the turkey wings with which they had come provided; for, while the nights are cool even in summer, the days are warm in late autumn on No Bus'ness. To-day was especially so, and those women who had no turkey-wings, bent their paw-paw riding whips double, and stretched their red neckerchiefs over them for fans. And some fanned

rapidly, with a quick, nervous motion, and others—staid, stout matrons—gently flapped their fans against their bosoms, and looked upward, at an angle of forty-five degrees. Some took off their sunbonnets and laid them across their laps, and these invariably exposed a twist of hair with the end protruding at a tangent; for hair-pins are unknown on No Bus'ness, and there is a limit to the ability of the back comb.

Many of the women, as well as men, used tobacco. Conspicuous among them were two girls, who sat well forward and evidently thought themselves leading the singing. While the song, "O sisters aint you happy," was singing, they removed their snuff sticks, and gave the song their exclusive attention. But they had to expectorate once a stanza, and feeling that both must not stop at once, they alternated; —the taller one taking her intermission at the end of the stanza, the shorter one at the end of the refrain. And the tall one was an adept at the business. She shot her mouthfuls of discolored saliva from the end of her tongue with wonderful precision of aim, striking with each discharge, a bench leg diagonally across the aisle, where it drained down, making a puddle of more than medium size.

But Brother Duncan is beginning to preach.

There he stands, a rather heavy set man, with a face like a pugilist and a voice like a young lion. His text is, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness," but his sermon would apply equally well to any other passage of Scripture. He begins with a long-winded prelude concerning himself.

"My brethering, I thank God that my jeens coat haint never breshed the dust orfum nary college wall. All the trainin' I've got fur ter be a preacher, God gin me. An' wen God trains a man fur ter preach, he makes him a preacher *right.* An' I'm as morril a man as ever you seed, I reckon. An' nobody over whar I live on Lynn Camp won't go afore the court an' swear as ever he seed Ab Duncan so drunk but wot he cud get home."

Then he goes to the twelfth chapter of Revelation and talks about the woman astannin' on the moon-ah! then begins at the creation and takes in with a tremendous sweep, the fall of man, the exodus, the birth of Christ, and the conversion of Saul. Then he returns to the Apocalypse and the woman, with much repetition and increased lung power. His face streams with perspiration, and his tone is a veritable bray; hardly a word of what he says being understood. As he approaches his perora-

tion, he holds out his gorilla face, with eyes blood-shot and every pore dripping, and while proceeding to wipe it with his red handkerchief, says:—

"Jes' look at my face! Do you 'spose I could look this away ef I warnt a Christain? Oh! ef thishyur aint religion I dunno wut 'tis!"

He concludes with a graphic picture of the Day of Judgment, having not once directly or indirectly alluded to his text.

Space will not permit the insertion of the profound discourses of Brethren Hopkins, Simmons, Albright and the others, all of whom preached. Brother Jones, of Laurel County, laid on the cap sheaf, or as he expressed it, "laid up the top rails."

"I mos' giner'ly alers notice," he began, "wen they's a big meetin' an' I'm thar, they mos' giner'ly alers calls on me last—I may say fur to lay up the top rails. An' I alers see them that's been scattered round in the woods comes up—comes nearer ter hear me. Neow, I'm agwine fur ter be brief on this occasion, fur the congregation has been right smartly worried a'ready. An' you'll fine my tex—Hole on! I caint never preach 'th my coat on."

Off came his coat, and as he warmed to the

subject he slipped his knit suspenders (attached to his trousers by little hickory sticks in lieu of buttons) from off his shoulders, rolled up his sleeves, unbuttoned his shirt at the neck, exposing his hairy chest, held his left hand on his ear, and gesticulated wildly with his right, raced up and down like a chained maniac, spitting right and left, and singing his incoherent sentences in a tone of thunder. The only intelligible portion of a sentence in the latter part of it was that he "would rather be a pine-knot in hell" than something. And then he called for a song and invited those who so desired to come forward to the mourners' bench; and while they sang, he exhorted and threatened and bellowed in a tone audible above the voices of the whole congregation. Then followed a prayer for the mourners, during which some of the latter "got the power," and then Brother Albright opened the doors of the church.

"An' neow awhilst we sing, all them as wants ter jine the ole Hardshell Babtist Church, come for'ard. Give me yer hand an' the Lord yer heart an' take yer seat on thishyur front bainch."

Tom stood and watched the candidates go forward, Lindy among them. Just as the last stanza was finished, to the surprise of the whole

congregation and himself, Tom walked up the aisle, took his seat on the end of the bench, and buried his face in his hands.

He had not fully considered this step or he would not have taken it. He had always intended in an indefinite sort of way to be a Christian sometime, but was totally in the dark as to what constitutes a Christian life. Since last night he had experienced an unusual feeling, which had grown upon him with his plan to leave home—an all-alone feeling, and he wanted a Friend. Everything was dark about him when the sudden impulse seized him to take a step with the others; and his blind step was toward the sun-rise. Perhaps it was only an impulse; perhaps it was the Divine Spirit. But it was more than the instantaneous flash of a sudden desire; it was the firing of his whole being, which had long, unknown to him, been ready for the spark of a crisis to kindle within him the flame of a right decision.

The candidates proceeded to give their experience. Most of them had had a hard struggle before they had "got through," and some were positive that they never could have succeeded but for the appearance of some dream or vision. One old woman had seen the devil.

"Wunct he come to me in the shape of a

yalligator, an' wunct he come to me in the shape of the shadow of a big yaller dog. 'N' I tole him '*Go way! Yer caint hev me!*' An' then I jes' made up my mind *I'd pray!*"

"Mighty wise resolution, sister," interrupted Brother Albright.

"An' so I prayed an' prayed twell I got through, an' now I wouldn't take nothin' for the hope I've got. Oh! I wouldn't swap hit fur ten thousand sech worlds as thishyur."

Old Samson Walsh and his wife were received. Their experiences were somewhat alike. Mrs. Walsh—

"War a washin' dishis in the porch, an' they come a leetle bird an' sot on a hollyhock bush in the yaird 'n' sung: '*Lucee-ee thy sins 'r' forgiven thee-ee.*' 'N' then it flew up ter heaving asingin', '*Lucee-ee foller me-e-e!.*'"

And old Samson said: "Wull, I went out to the backer house an' went ter strippin' backer. 'N' I got ter thinkin' 'bout my speritool condition, 'n' 'twas mighty bad. 'N' they come a leetle bird an' sot on a stalk o' backer an' sez, sez she, 'Samson, thy sins air forgiven thee,'" and noticing an incredulous grin on the faces of some of the young men, he added with more earnestness than piety: "'N' b' golly, I believe hits so!"

Lindy's experience was very brief and low. She had alers wanted to be a Christian, 'an now she b'lieved she was one, an' she hoped they'd all pray for her that she might be a better one. Some questions were asked her to which she answered "Yes, sir," without any very definite understanding of their meaning.

Old Jim Hanson had had a heap o' dreams, 'n' he'd tole 'em to a heap o' preachers, 'n' they'd tole him them was jest as purty dreams as any person ever had, 'n' that he had ort to jine the church, An' he'd studied a heap about it, 'n' concluded he war agittin' old an' warn't stout nohow an' mought die anytime amost, an' he reckoned mebby he'd best jine.

All this time Tom sat appalled at his rash act. He really wished himself back again.

"But hits too late ter crawfish on 'er now," he thought. "I've got hit ter do."

When asked for his experience he replied:

"I haint got none."

"But, brother," remonstrated Brother Albright, "whut did ye come for'ard fur ef yer haint got no experunce?"

"I dunno. To *git* a experunce, I reckon."

"You bad orter a stayed out twill you got it," said Brother Duncan.

"I've bin a stayin out a right smart while

an' haint no nearder a gittin' a experunce nor I was afore," said Tom, his power of speech returning as his combativeness was aroused by this unexpected opposition.

"Well, brother," said Brother Albright, "then s'pos'n' ye jes sorter tell us how ye feel."

"Well," said Tom rising, "I didn't really expec' ter come for'ard, 'n' I dunno wy I did; ony jes I wanter be a Christian an' I didn't know what else ter do. The Bible sez ter make straight in the wilderness the way of the Lord, but 'pears to me like the way you fellers blaze out is a powerful crooked un. I caint git inter hit, 'pears like. The Bible sez, 'Blessed air them as hungers an' thirstis atter righteousness 'n' they shall be filled.' I've ben a comin' hyur tolable reg'lar an' I'm a hungerin'. The Bible sez fur you ter 'Feed my sheep,' 'n' I reckon I'm the ninety-ninth un as stayed away. But you don't do it. You fellers jes' tole me along through the woods, a makin' a powerful big noise a rattlin' the corn in the maisure, but only a shellin' me off now and then a grain, an' never givin' me nary decent bite. An' I'm mighty nigh a starvin'. I've been a studyin' 'bout it off an' on fur a right smart spell, 'n' p'tic'lar since yistidy. I hadn't no notion o' comin' for'ard, but when the rest come, 'peared

like I wanted to too, fur I want to be a Christian as bad as any of 'em, an' need it, I reckon, a heap wuss 'n' ary one on 'em. An' I was a stannin' thar, 'n' they come a feelin' sorter sudden like that mebby ef I'd come this fur, I cud see the way round ter the next bend in the road, 'n' I jes' come. An' I'm willin' ter be *bab*tized er ter jine—I haint a keerin' now wut ye do with me, but I wanter know wut 'tis fur to be a Christian, 'n' I want ter *be* it."

Tom sat down breathless, and again covered his face. A pause followed his speech, so eloquent in its desperation and sudden earnestness. Brother Duncan was not altogether satisfied with Tom's experience.

"Tworn't speritool nuff," he said half aloud. "Hit don' do no good fur to *bab*tize a feller as haint bin changed. We haint no Campbellites. Water don' change a feller; ony jes' yer put him down a dry devil an' fotch him up a wet devil."

After a moment Brother Albright rose, blew his nose, and said:

"Wull, I haint sure but they's some words o' truth in wut the brother's bin a sayin'. We've bin a tryin' fur ter feed him on the Bread o' Life, but 'pears like he haint got nuthin' but huskis. I dunno's I orter *bab*tize ye, Brother

Baker, but I'll resk it. The Bible sez, 'Him thet's weak in the faith receive ye,' so I reckon I'll resk it. An' neow, less have 'nother hyme, an' awhilst we sing, we want the prayin' part of this congregation to come for'ard an' extend the right hand o' congratulation to those new members."

Then they sang, "I am bound for the promised land," and the whole congregation shook hands with the new members and the preachers and each other, and the meeting adjourned to the creek. Down the narrow road the congregation crowded, many rushing along paths and through nigh-cuts to secure favorable positions. Part of the way Tom walked with Lindy, but they exchanged only a word or two. But how happy Lindy felt, that the barrier between Tom and herself was down.

Old Mrs. Walsh was first baptized. She shouted in the water, and as she came up, broke from Brother Albright and rushed to the bank, where two or three old sisters met and embraced her. When old Samson was baptized, she rushed into the water to meet him, splashing, struggling, hugging him affectionately and shouting vociferously. Others delivered little speeches, carefully prepared for the occasion, in a manner intended to appear extemporaneous.

When it was over, Brother Albright came to the water's edge and standing ankle deep in the stream, called for appointments. Brother Duncan announced the meeting in the Seed-Tick school-house on the head waters of Hiwassy; Brother Simmons "norated" meeting on Red Bird the fourth Saturday and Sunday, and the funeral of old Aunt Sally Berry at the graveyard below Preacher Jake Wattses on Bull Creek on the second Saturday and Sunday of next month. Thus "all minds were discharged," and at four o'clock P. M. Brother Albright "craved the benediction," and the Big Meetin' on No Bus'ness wound up.

V.

Lindy felt better after the meeting had ended. Tom, she felt sure, would be over early in the week, and the whole matter would now be adjusted to their mutual satisfaction. Marriages in the mountains are speedily consummated when once decided upon, and Lindy built her air-castle high. They would live with Tom's parents for awhile, until Tom could get a little clearing started on a corner of his father's farm, and then she and Tom would be alone together. A little cabin with a single room and a stick chimney, two chairs, a bed and a pine table—to this giddy altitude did she erect her aerial edifice.

But Tom had no such thoughts. He had no conception of the reason for his rejection. Girls as conscientious as Lindy are rare on No Business—and everywhere else. The rain began Sunday night, and next morning Dan, Tom and others left with the log rafts, floating down with the "tide."

Down, down the creek and into a larger one full to the tops of its banks with a dark, muddy

angry looking liquid; out on the rapid, swollen river; down, down between high cliffs, and through the narrow gorge in Pine Mountain; down, still down, landing and breaking up the rafts to let the logs go singly over the falls, then catching and re-fastening them below,—down, on down, the river growing wider as they descended, until the logs were safely locked in the boom at Jonesborough.

Tom landed, pocketed his scanty wages and walked through the large mills, staring at the large gang-saws, whose motion shook the whole building, and looking on all sides of himself before taking a step, lest he should fall into a saw or be caught in a belt. He went to the incline and watched the logs as they were drawn up from the river into the mill, and then walked out into the lumber yard. A man with a book and measuring stick seemed to be giving orders there. Tom watched him a while and then approached him with—

"Say, mister, hev you got all the men you want?"

"I don't know," replied the man, "step into the office yonder and inquire."

The man at the desk looked up as Tom entered, and waited for him to tell his business.

"Hev you got work for ary 'nother hand?" asked Tom.

"What can you do?"

"I kin do a'most anything that takes jist muscle, I reckon, and learn a'most anything as takes more'n that."

"Elliot!" called the man in the office through the window to the man with whom Tom had just spoken, "has Smith got over his drunk yet?"

"Guess not. He hasn't put in an appearance this morning."

"Do you need a man in his place?"

"Yes, we can use another one stacking lumber for a day or two anyhow."

So Tom secured a temporary place, which afterwards became permanent, and he rose gradually on his lumber-stack and in the esteem of the yard-boss, who found him strong, active, intelligent, willing and punctual. Tom's desire to learn led him to ask many questions which showed how little he knew of the world; but the answers were so carefully remembered that he seldom appeared ignorant twice on the same subject; and much of his verdancy and mountain dialect wore off as time wore on.

Sunday came. Tom heard the bells ringing and saw some of the two thousand people of Jones-

borough going, as he learned, to church; but as none of the mill-hands in the shanty where he boarded went, and the people who seemed to be going were better dressed than himself, Tom stayed in the shanty. He had a desire to go, but thought he would better wait and learn more about it. Meeting here and on No Bus'-ness were evidently different things.

But in the afternoon the boys in the shanty shaved and dressed up a little, and invited him to go with them to Sunday-school. In a former mule-shed near the mills, the crowd assembled. The house, though rough was clean, and the walls were papered with pictures illustrating past Sunday-school lessons. Most of those present were mill-hands and their families, and Tom did not feel ashamed of his clothes, for many were no better dressed than himself. Soon there came from the town a man and woman in a buggy, bringing with them a portable organ. Tom listened with interest to the opening exercises, and when placed in a class with other young men, many of whom he had met at the mill, he felt quite at home. The class was taught by the yard-boss of the mill. Tom listened attentively to every question and answer. The short hour of service soon passed, and Tom was decidedly sorry when the end came.

The organ was a great curiosity to him. While the last hymn was singing he walked half way up the aisle to hear it. Some of the hands laughed at him afterwards, but Tom said:

"Hit war a new wrinkle on my horn. I wanted to git to whar I could see the little thing a squawkin."

He determined to sit further forward next Sunday to see the "little thing" manipulated. In so doing he attracted the attention of the conductor, who, at the close, spoke to him and invited him to the meeting in the Front street church at night. He felt much less at home there, but enjoyed the singing; and some things in the sermon did him good.

Tom bought some school books and borrowed others, and with the assistance of one of his fellow laborers, advanced considerably in his studies. After a while he bought a suit of store clothes, and looked as well in them on Sundays as the hero of a story ought. He became a regular attendant at the Front street church; and each month won him many new friends. Daily he grew in knowledge, and learned lessons of practical Christianity.

Mr. Elliott, the yard boss, considered him his right hand man, and trusted him more and more;

and in six months, on Mr. Elliott's recommendation, Tom was promoted and his wages raised. Mr. Elliott saw in Tom the making of a noble man. Gladly he assisted him in his lessons, and especially in the study of the Bible. He took him to his home and introduced him to Mrs. Elliott, a kind, lively little woman, who treated Tom in a manner half motherly, half sisterly, and withal very pleasant to Tom.

But there were times when Tom felt a nameless sadness. Hard as he tried to forget Lindy, to reproach her, to cease to care for her, not a day passed in which he did not think of the pleasant hours he had spent with her before the Big Meeting on No Bus'ness. At length he decided that she must by this time be the wife of Sam Sanders, and that he did not care. But there remained in his heart a very tender place where his affection for Lindy had once been.

If Tom, who tried, could not forget Lindy, much less could Lindy, who did not try, forget Tom.

Every one on No Bus'ness was surprised when Tom left; and their surprise was doubled when Dan Walker and his crowd returning, reported that Tom had secured a position in Jonesborough and was going to stay. Mrs. Hale was especially puzzled.

"Lindy," she asked, "what's the hardness atwixt you an' Tom?"

"I never knowed as they *wair* no hardness," replied Lindy, evasively.

"Haint ye done had no quarrelin'?" asked her mother.

"No," answered Lindy briefly.

Mrs. Hale wanted to ask more, but forbore lest she should reveal the curiosity she felt. She merely remarked that hit was mighty quare. That gals nowadays didn't know their own minds. Hyur Lindy had druv off Tom Baker, as stiddy a young feller as they was on the creek, and couldn't tell wy she done hit. Gals was gittin' mighty p'tic'lar wen they wanted better fellers 'n' Tom Baker. But thet was the way—go through the woods and cut a crooked stick at las'.

But as Lindy held her peace, the old lady changed her opinion.

"No, hit caint be thet away," she said to herself. "Lindy thinks a heap o' Tom, an' Tom thinks right smart o' Lindy. Tom's jest went down thar fur to yarn him a leetle grain o' money to start on, an' he'll come back in a few months an' marry Lindy."

Nothing had occurred to remove this impression, when one afternoon almost a year

after Tom's departure, Tom himself, well dressed, rode up the creek and alighted at 'Lijah's post-and-railing.

"Wy Tom Baker! Laws a massy ef it taint you," exclaimed Mrs. Hale, wiping her hand on her apron before extending it. "Law, law! Wy yer face looks familiar but yer cloe's is plum like Sam Sanderses. Well, well! Take a cheer an' se' down. Yes; all tol'able well. The ole man's pestered right smart with the rheumatiz an' I've got the newralgy powerful bad. Ole Tom Sawyers has got the eyeresypilus, an' ole Aunt Sally Gilreath is a dyin' of a cayncer an' they're a havin' the whoopin'-cough mighty bad up on Dif*fic*ulty, an' the sore eyes has broke eout in the school; an' Joe Jones is sick—the doctor sez he's got the scrofulo. An' corn haint no 'count, an' the mast is light; an' I drempt last night o' combin' my head an' a fin'-in' lice, an' that's a sign o' sickness. They's ben a sight o' trouble sence you lef'. But whar ye ben, Tom?" she asked, not because she had told all the news, but for once was more anxious to listen than to talk.

Tom told her of his success. "An' I reckon you've come back to marry Lindy an' settle down on No Bus'ness agin, hey?"

"I—I haint a goin' to stay," stammered Tom.

"I come up to brand some logs the company's got up in here, and see to getting them floated down when the tide comes."

Mrs. Hale saw his blush and understood it, as she would have understood any act, as an acknowledgment of his intention to marry Lindy. "An' so you'll tote Lindy way off down the river. An' me a gittin' old, an' Jinny no 'count fur to do housework, an' sickness a comin'—law! law!" and thus she went on.

"Where is Lindy at?" asked Tom.

"She's gone up the creek to her Aunt Betty's. Don't be in a resh, Tom. Hit's a couple o' hours b' sun yit. Stay 'n' hev supper, an' lift yer saddle 'n' put out yer nag." But Tom said he must be getting home.

Lindy's Aunt Betty lived on Troublesome, and Tom's best road was up Dif*fic*ulty, but he concluded to take the Troublesome road. There wasn't much difference, nohow, he persuaded himself.

He pondered the old lady's words. Lindy wasn't married. He had feared she would be—expected to find her so, though he had professed to himself not to care. It was evident that he had decided too hastily about Sam Sanders.

"I'll try her again," he thought. "No, I

won't either," he debated, "once is enough. —But maybe now, just *maybe* it might be different this time. No harm to try, anyway. Yes, I will—But no. Anyway, I don't believe I will. I hope I'll meet her on the road. I'll just say, 'Howdy,' and ride by, and see how she takes it."

He decided to ride slowly that he might be more certain to meet her returning; but found himself constantly touching his horse with the spur. He saw a sun-bonnet ahead—yes, it was Lindy's, a turn in the road revealed her coming toward him. Tom's heart beat faster and his face flushed more deeply with each step of his horse. They were very near before Lindy recognized him. Then suddenly her face lighted up with a look which Tom saw and understood in spite of her quick effort to hide it. He did not say "Howdy" and ride on, but dismounted and walked back with her. They said little—there was little need for words, as hand in hand, after the mountain fashion for lovers, they descended the road on the creek bank through the reddening foliage of the early autumn. And Tom stayed at 'Lijah Hale's for supper.

Tom went back to Jonesborough a happy man, and quietly made some arrangements. A

little box-house of two rooms near the mill has been rented and plainly furnished, and is to be occupied about Christmas week. And Lindy is to have her geography and grammar, and attend, for the present, the Jonesborough school.

It would be pleasant, if it were possible, to bring prophesy in where history stops, and describe the mental and spiritual growth of Tom and Lindy in their new situation. But here we must leave them, believing that if we ever meet them again, we shall discern in their life, signs of gratifying progress since the Wind-Up of the Big Meetin' on No Bus'ness.

POSTSCRIPT.

The author ventures to hope that his little story has roused in the reader more than a passing interest in the people of the Cumberland Mountains. Shut in from contact with the world, destitute of railroads and navigable streams, progress has gone around them; and though now somewhat rapidly improving in places, they are still destitute of many advantages.

They were loyal to the nation in its dark hours, and the nation owes them a debt of gratitude. The American Missionary Association to the extent of its ability, is extending to them the advantages of better schools and churches. In this endeavor it deserves the support, not simply of a denomination, but of all friends of charity and justice.

To the kind-hearted mountain folk the author is indebted for unnumbered acts of hospitality and friendship. With feelings of kindness and gratitude only, he looks back upon his life among them.

The oddities of mountain character are nowhere more prominent than in their meetings; and no attempt has been made in the story to soften down the mingling of the sublime and the ridiculous which sometimes appears in them, under the leadership of the more ignorant preachers. It is hoped that no reader will regard this story as evidence of any desire on the part of the author to ridicule or treat lightly the religious sentiment of the mountaineer, which is deep-seated and generally sincere, however odd or even uncouth the form of its expression.

Berea College, Kentucky, and the A. M. A. are sending teachers and missionaries into this region. Berea has educated many young mountaineers who must otherwise have grown up in ignorance; and scores of her students spend their summer vacations teaching the mountain schools. Her work is far-reaching, and of inestimable value.

The Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, also, is doing admirable work, both independently and in connection with the work of the American Missionary Association. There is probably no missionary society which makes a dollar go further in its noble work of saving souls.

The author takes the liberty of appending the names of officers who will gladly give information concerning, or receive aid for, this work:

Rev. M. E. Strieby, 56 Reade St., N. Y., Rev. J. E. Roy, 151 W. Washington St., Chicago, Secretaries of the A. M. A.; Rev. A. E. Dunning, Secretary Congregational S. S. and Pub. Society, Congregational House, Boston; P. D. Dodge, Secretary and Treasurer Berea College, Berea, Ky.

There is no better way of lending to the Lord than by assisting either of these objects. Much has been done, much is now in progress, but there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

THE AUTHOR.