

on the wind-swept plains of dear old Kansas and be bedeviled by a razor-back shote that could drink buttermilk out of a jug.

"He was the apple of Sally's eye, and unless you was familiar with the breed you couldn't have told whether or not he was a baby buffalo or an animated wedge. He was built fore and aft like a buffalo, and aft and fore like a wedge, except for a curly tail on the aft end, and a few rubber-set shaving-brushes scattered along his head and neck, which was the starting-point of the fore end, with which he rooted me, individually and collectively, over a quarter-section of sand burs and cactus. He would have kept it up all night, if I had not called him aside and talked to him with a whiffletree a few minutes and sent him crow-hopping and buck-jumping toward the house, disturbing sleeping nature with a noise that sounded like a busted trombone in a drunken German band.

"Now that was about three-thirty, and I'll bet two bits I didn't sleep thirty minutes before old Hunk blowed the horn and maw yelled breakfast. 'Hurry, boys,' old Hunk says in his fatherly tone; 'being as this is William's first morning, I've let you sleep a little longer than usual.'

"I made out the best I could at breakfast, but somehow I couldn't help but think that all hands thought I needed dieting, and everybody was trying to help me out. It was just gray daylight when we got the mules harnessed and hitched to the wagon. By the time the sun peeped, we had cut two barge-loads of sunflowers and one of muletail weeds and wheat, and started a stack-bottom as big as a meeting-house. Work? Man alive, I never knowed three men and a girl could do as much as we did. Bill was stacking, Sally driving, me loading the barge and old Hunk a-driving the header.

"And do you believe it? Jack and Beck working like a Jew after a nickel, and as calm and peaceful as Dobbin's old gray mare. By ten o'clock I was so hungry I could have eat a dray-horse and snapped at the driver, and by eleven I couldn't tell whether my back was broke or I just had an old-fashioned pain. Honest, it was awful. I was just going to ask Sally not to let the choir sing, 'What will the harvest be,' when maw blowed the horn.

"You see, I was to get three dollars per day in coin of the realm. Now from that day to this the word 'per' has never been in any contract of mine, for per means perhaps you get it, and perhaps you don't, with the emphasis on the you don't. I'd a' got it all right if Sally

hadn't been sick, but she was, and it fell to my lot to drive the mules, and load while I was resting. It went fine for about an hour, but then Jack showed his disposition. Now, I have often wondered what become of all the devils Peter cast into the hogs that was drowned in the Red Sea. The hogs died all right, but it don't stand to reason that you could drown a devil, leastwise I never heard of one drowning or meeting a violent or a natural death; so where did they go? Non, take it from me, that they just wandered around nowhere at all till that mule was born, and then they colonized him. Between mending the harness and wagon and waiting for the spirit to move, we didn't cut enough wheat to feed a dominecker rooster.

"Man alive, I shore was tired when I stuck my feet under the table and took an absent-treatment supper. As soon as we cleaned up the table we went to the barn. I had curried Beck and was waiting for Bill to give Jack a lick and a promise, when old Hunk come in. 'William,' says he in his fatherly manner, 'I always pays my hands on Saturday night. Now, William, if you had a' drove the mules to-day as well as Sally did Friday, you would have had six dollars coming, but as it is, we are just even. It will take the three dollars you earned Friday to repair the damage to the wagon and the harness that it suffered to-day, and as you were the cause of a very expensive delay to-day, the money you earned to-day will be applied to that source.' Turning from me before I could thank him for sparing my life, he says, 'Bill, you know how we stand, don't you?' 'Yes, air, Mr. Hunkinson,' says Bill. 'All right, boys, now that everything is squared up between us, come up to the house as soon as you get the chores done, and have a glass of cider for good-will.' And with them words he turned and sneaked off toward the house, rubbing his hands and talking to himself.

"I watched him until he was in the door, then I turned to Bill, who was standing first on one foot and then the other, like a chicken with its toes froze, and shaking like he had the buck ague. He had turned a sorter pea-green colour, and looked as if he would have run off if you had shook a tin can behind him. 'Cheer up, Bill,' says I, 'the devil's dead.'

"No, he ain't,' Bill said kinder solemn like, 'least not while Jim Hunkinson is alive; and he is the only devil I am afraid of.'

"How long have you been working for him, Bill?"

"A little better than two months, says he.

"And how much does he owe you, Bill?" says I.

"That's just it,' says Bill, scratching his head like little Lewis doing 'James has two apples and Walter has six.' 'You see, I drove the mules about three weeks, and up to date I owe him something like twenty-seven dollars.'

"In less than two minutes we had as honest quart of red warrior ants, and anyone of them could have bit a ten-penny nail in two, they was that mad. We corked up the bottle and went to the stable. Bill tickled to death with himself, and me trying to think of something that would come up to his joke. While Bill was hiding the ants it come to me. I told Bill about it



"I heard her yell, 'They did it, Jim.'"

"Twenty-seven dollars!" I yelled.

"Not so loud," says Bill, kinder skeered like. 'Hunk will hear you, and if he does, may the Lord have mercy on your soul, for he won't.'

"Why, in the name of Mike, didn't you leave, you saphead?"

"Well, says he, 'I'm kinder laying low, looking for a chance to get even.'

"Do you mean it, Bill?" says I.

"Yes, I do mean it."

"I'm on, brother; I lay into the game right here, and every time we fall to score on old Hunk, I give you a fresh cigar.' Just then Bill decided that Jack had been curried enough. So we went to the house and drank to the complete and speedy downfall of our tight-fisted employer.

"Sunday we laid around all day, listening to Hunk and greasing the wagons. After a disappointing dinner, I had set down on the shady side of the granary to fight buffalo gnats, when Bill come out of the stable smiling and looking about as happy as a clam at high tide.

"Now me for a man who can smile in the face of trouble; he can get a membership in my Optimist Club any time he wants it, and a man who can laugh like Bill did when he set down by me is a chartered member.

"What's up, Bill?" says I. 'Why, don't you pry yourself loose from the joke and pass it around among your friends?'

"All right, William, here it is; and he pulled an empty quart bottle out of his pocket and passed it to me. Now, I can work up a real good laugh over a glass of Hunk's cider; but an empty bottle struck me as poor comedy, and I told him so; and my voice did not sound like that of a comrade and friend.

"Hold on a minute, William,' says Bill, 'let me show you what I'm going to do with this empty quart bottle.' He whispered a few words in my ear that tickled me more than you could with a feather. When I got through holding my sides, we sneaked off through the blue-stem grass. Party soon we came to an ant-hill; Bill stuck the neck of the bottle down the family entrance, and stamped on the ground a few times, and here they come.

and he set down in the stable door to act as lookout, and commenced to tell his woes in music on an a-the-matical mouth organ, and I got busy with the brichen of Jack's harness, driving brass-headed tacks into it until they were thicker than hops. The tacks stuck through the brichen about half an inch, and I could shut my eyes and catch a moving picture of Jack when he sat down in the harness, which was a favourite trick of his, and the final of the man who was pulling the bell cord over his back. We devoted the rest of the afternoon to picking our grips and steading the mercury out of the thermometers. After supper, we sat around and smoked a while, and on our way to the straw stack we got our grips, and hit the grit up the section road. About three miles up the road we hid the baggage in a straw stack. By eleven o'clock, we was in the field back of old Hunk's, disconnecting the header and distributing nuts, bolts, and chain links over a quarter section of sunflowers, where the old Nick himself couldn't find 'em. When the chickens was crowing midnight we was roasting Sally's pet pig out of our bed in the straw stack.

"Bill scratched his back, and I shell-ed corn toward the stable. It took us half an hour to fool that leg a hundred yards, but when we did get him to the stable we made short work of him. I had a bandanna around his nose in a wink, and Bill hog tied him in no time. Then I got busy with the mercury, pouring some in each ear, tamping some cotton in on top of the mercury to hold it in place. After putting the bottle of ants in Bill's pocket, we was ready to start. Bill grabbed the aft end of the shote, and with me on the fore end we sneaked up to the back of the house and laid our animated burden on the ground under old Hunk's bedroom window. Hunk was sleeping like a buzz-saw, with maw a good second, coming good and loud part of the time, and then fading away in the distance. But old Hunk was there with bells on, good and strong all the time. Ripping the mosquito-bar netting of the window-frame we laid the whole in on the floor. Then Bill uncorked the bottle



"Every time Bill would rub his improvised curysomb over Jack's ribs that equine would jump for the roof."