

green trimmings and a number of buildings. I thought rather grimly, "Hope they pay in advance."

I struck out across the fields, whistling as I went, and in spite of aches and bruises, alive to and still enjoying the adventure.

I was within a few yards of the big white house when I saw a lady come out and look anxiously up and down the road, and then come down the path to the gate. I began to consider what would be the proper way to ask for work, and at the same time intimate that breakfast would be doubly appreciated if it came first. I reproached myself for a reluctance to do this, but while these thoughts occupied me I also noted that the windows of this big house were neglected, the doors of the outbuildings open, and that a general air of forbearance pervaded the place. Then I again turned my attention to the lady, and to my surprise saw that she was evidently waiting to intercept me. She was young, refined, and would have been looking, if not strictly pretty, if it were not for a look of anxiety which brought out lines in her pale face.

"I'll try my best," she said pleadingly. "The man who has been working for us is unable to do anything. I have an invalid father."

"I came here to ask for temporary work, and I interest myself in the work," she returned, brightly. "I'll do anything and as we walked together to the house, she explained the situation, and she said, there is no telephone in the house, there shall be as soon as possible—and Jackson the only help in the place now, has broken his arm."

She led me around the house as she talked, and I saw we were approaching the barn. I hoped she wanted me to harness or saddle a horse and get medical or other aid, and I was casting about for some way to suggest the added swiftness that breakfast would bring about. I could see that she trusted me fully, stranger as I was to her. Before she could say anything, she began to speak again, and she herself introduced the interesting subject of the morning meal.

My father is more particular about having his breakfast on time, and just as he likes it, than he is about almost anything else, and I was just desperate about his warm milk.

By this time we were at the barn, and I became aware of two black cows with eyes mild enough, but with horns having what seemed to me a dangerous slant, and had never felt the slightest attraction toward cows, and had never struck up an acquaintance with one.

"There is hay there," said the girl, pointing to it. "You can give them each a good armful, while I get the milk-pail from the kitchen for you. They are restless because it is far past their milking time. The milking-stool is here," and, touching it, where it hung near by, away she went, leaving me alone with those horned horrors. I rapidly flew my thoughts; I felt a little like the man who, on experiencing religion, professed himself ready to do anything the Lord asked of him, and I was wondering if I would willingly do anything for the roused young woman, but why should fate arrange that the first thing she asked of me was something entirely beyond my experience? Was this the reason that knights of the road had gained the reputation of asking for work and paying for it to get it? In the future, I told myself, I would remember that there are two sides to every story—even the tramp's.

"I pulled down the hay, and the cows set to work disposing of it. One uttered a sound that I took for a battle-cry, and I beat a retreat to the door. The girl was hastening back with a large tin pail and a white china pitcher, smiling brightly at me.

"I'll milk you a little, and take it in a pail to the kitchen, before milking the second one. I keep the milk separate; it is one of father's notions."

"Honesty is always best," prompted a small innervoice, and I obeyed the admonition. "I have never seen a cow milked," I owned, feeling it hard to see the hope die out of her face. "I went on with an effort, 'if you can tell me how to do it, or if you can come here and direct me, I will do what I can.'"

She set the pail on the path with a sigh. "I don't know anything about it," she said; "I wish I did. It looks easy, yet we looked into each other's eyes, and suddenly we both laughed at the sound of her laughter I felt braver and ready to fight any difficulty, for it was a very musical laugh. I remember it through all these years."

"I'll see if Jackson can come down and tell you, and she was on like a flash. Jackson did manage to come down, and, under his direction, and with some slight assistance from him, I got through the work after a fashion. Breakfast followed in due time, and I thought that my cooking could expect that of Miss Rowell, which was the young lady's name, as I learned from Jackson.

Later on the day, when Jackson's arm had been set, and a man procured to take his place for a time, I had said good-bye, with a curious wonder if I should ever see her again. I did not, however, and she is coming down on the train this evening.

Walcott gave a start. "What! Mrs. Ferris?"

"The very same," said Ferris, and smoked a while in silence. Then he resumed his story.

"She was very shy when she pressed a folded bill into my hand, for, as she has said since, she saw that the suit of overalls was not an accustomed dress with men. In spite of needing the money, I took it with reluctance, too. I felt the inadvisability of trying to board a freight train in daylight, and I was becoming more anxious than ever to get to my destination. So I bought a ticket with the dollar Miss Rowell had paid me and travelled like a Christian."

I reached the end of this part of my trip about 4 o'clock, my overalls rolled into a compact bundle under my arm, and I looked about to see something of the place. I found that I had very little inclination to repeat the experience of the night before. I could not afford to spend much, so I went into a saloon where a tempting free lunch was advertised, and at a cost of five cents and a small snipping of my pride I had sufficient supper. I went back to the railroad station, found a chance to don again the overalls, and came out on the platform fully equipped just as a passenger train slowed up. Then I had an inspiration, and followed it quickly enough to find myself on the front platform of the baggage car, directly behind the engine tank, as the train pulled out of the station. In the gathering darkness, in a very self-congratulatory frame of mind, I was rapidly carried on my way.

I remained undiscovered, and tried to think the position very superior to the place in the box car, but the night became chilly, and my nerves played many tricks. I was glad to drop off, when the train stopped in the early morning. The place now reached was a city of considerable size, and I could not bring myself to play tramp before me, provided I was as fortunate as heretofore. I removed the overalls, and after a light breakfast went to a public library, and getting into a comfortable position fell fast asleep over a newspaper. The nap and the reading carried me on to noon time, when I again exploited a free lunch proposition. A walk followed, in which I located the freight yards, and planned the continuance of my travels. By this time I had a curious sensation, perhaps the result of fatigue and nervousness, and that I was a looker-on at the life around me, and stood outside of it. With this came a certain indifference as to determination to see the adventure through.

It was strange that I had encountered so little difficulty in this free travelling. I turned this fact over in my mind, and smiled as I thought that perhaps fate was in this way tempting me into the path of the hobnob. "Poor fellows," I said to myself, "if they find any fun in this kind of life, they should at least be free from persecution in following it."

This night, the third on the road, I was lucky enough to find an empty box car in a train going in my direction. My overalls, combined with an acquired swing and swagger that had noted among the train crews, carried me safely through, and with a deep sigh I dropped down in a chosen corner and hoped I would sleep through a good part of the night, of misery ahead of me for I was very tired. After a time I did sleep; how long this lasted I could not tell. I awoke with a vague sense of terror, and it was a moment or so before I could grasp the meaning of the unaccountable situation. When I did so, I yawned and sat up. Almost immediately I became conscious of another living something near by. There seemed no definite reason for the feeling, but I experienced a painful nervous thrill, as if the certain proximity of something—man or beast—alive. Yet I had expected to meet tramps, and had been, a little disappointed that I had not, so far, here, six days ago.

Deciding quickly, I put my hand into my pocket for a cigar, the last in my possession. Whatever the creature might be, the light of a match would disclose it, and if I lit the cigar with the same match, my action would indicate an absence of fear or suspicion, if the creature was of the same species as myself. I found a fine match, and guarding it carefully, bent over its feeble light, only to see at a glance before it had accomplished any part of my purpose. I spoke one word, which I think you can guess, and another voice said, "Never mind, it would not be wise to smoke, anyway."

The voice was a quiet, well-modulated one, and my nervousness subsided.

"I don't know I had a fellow passenger," I said, with a long sigh of relief. "Were you here when I got in?"

He answered the other, "but I didn't get a glimpse of your face until you lit that match. I rather think this is a new mode of travel for you—am I right?"

"Well," I said cautiously, "as you have a little advantage of me in this conversation—I have not seen your face, you know—I'm uncertain whether to answer that or not."

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