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"He loves to talk with folks like Maggie Gillis"

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By
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Dedicated to all those good people who were once pronounced bad, and to those bad people who will some day uncover the Good.

ILLUSTRATIONS

From the Lynnville (Vt.) TIMES, *Sept. 15, 1921.*
News Item — Peoria, Sept. 2.

> *By the astounding confession of the late Judge Benjamin Atwood of this city, just before his death, the name of one Elijah Golden is cleared of complicity in the crime for which he died in a western penitentiary many years ago. Nothing of the said Golden's antecedents appears to be known. He was a curious and somewhat mysterious character, and died without funds or known relations.*

The above notice came under the eye of the editor by the merest accident, and is reproduced herewith in the hope that some of our older readers will be able to associate the name of this Elijah Golden with incidents which occurred in the little village of East Burdon, five miles north of here, something over forty years ago.

We recall that the late editor of the TIMES, *the Hon. Nathan Wilson, who was a native of that*

town, not infrequently referred to the life and teachings of a certain "Lige" Golden, and this man, who was a blacksmith by trade, appears to have left a marked impress upon his boyhood imagination.

If further information about this individual and the incidents surrounding his career can be obtained from first-hand sources, in the light of the above news item, we opine that it will prove of unusual interest to our readers. Ed.

Lynnville Times — Sept. 29.

In response to our request in last fortnight's issue for information relative to Elijah Golden, we have been agreeably surprised by the receipt from an unexpected source of what promises to be a most entertaining and instructive document. This is in the form of a somewhat voluminous set of diary notes made by one of the boys who lived in the village of East Burdon in the old days and was in fact the boyhood chum of the late editor of this paper, Mr. Wilson.

These notes, some of which are mutilated and others faded with age, are receiving the discriminating attention of our editorial staff, and it is the intention to reproduce them in our columns in as

nearly their original form and chronological order as is consistent with clearness.

The writer of these notes will no doubt be identified by some of his old friends, but as he has been a little shy about the use of his name in public print, we shall abide by his wishes. Suffice to say that he is an eminently respected and successful professional man in one of the big cities of the middle west.

He writes that in order to educate their "precocious only son" his family moved from the country shortly after the events described, and later migrated to westward. For this reason he has never revisited the haunts of his boyhood, but the mental pictures which he carries of the little hamlet nestled among the hills are very vivid, and bring back many scenes and incidents which have profoundly influenced his life.

He expresses the hope that after the publication of such portions of his notes as we deem "wise and proper" it will be safe for him to visit the town; and wishes to know if there is still good fishing in the old Dishmill Brook.

We have assured him that some things never grow old, and our cordial invitation is to come back and try his hand. The Dishmill is one of

the brooks that has never yet disappointed its old admirers.

Next week we shall therefore issue the first installment of

LIGE GOLDEN

The Man Who Twinkled.

The incidents herein are recorded as taking place during the spring, summer and fall of the year 1879. As the original notes have required a certain amount of transposition and rearrangement in the interests of continuity, it has been thought wise to omit specific dates.

I

Saturday.

Today has been a pretty exciting day in our village and Lige Golden is the hero, although I guess he made Doctor Rush feel pretty cheap, by bringing Charlie Whiting back to life long after the doctor said it was no use and had gone and told Josh Bean, the undertaker, about his drowning in the mill pond and to come and get him.

It was funny too, you can bet, to see the look on Josh's red face when he came, puffing and blowing, round the corner of his coffin and casket shop, and heard the boys all laughing and hurrahing, and shouting "He's all right," and somebody yelled "You're too late Josh," and his face fell like he really felt disappointed over what ever it was we were laughing at.

We couldn't help thinking what we heard Josh say, one day last week, when Lige Golden asked him, down in front of the post office before everybody: "How's business this spring?" and Josh answered right out, "Damn rotten, Lige, sense you come to town." Everybody laughed because

we all knew there hadn't been a death in town for a long time and that Lige had cured up the only prospect when he got old Carrie Finney on her feet and going about better than she had been for years. That's another story, as the writers say, but it just made the look on Josh's face seem all the funnier.

Lige's real name is Elijah Golden and he is the new man at the blacksmith shop. Bill Straiter hired him this spring when the work started up, and he does say he's the best horse shoer he ever had, though he just took him on trial, not knowing anything about him, or his family, or where he came from, or anything.

Lige has been working there over a month and nobody knows anything about him yet and they can't seem to get anything out of him, because every time they question him about himself he turns it off, some way or other, and begins to talk about other things. Some of the things he says sound kind of strange and most of the folks think he's a little queer in the head, but the boys mostly like him, because he's always so good natured, and when he does talk he's so interesting and so

different from anyone else in the village. I guess he must have traveled all over the world for he is always remarking, "That's the way they do things in Peru" or "That's what they say in India" or some other place.

Well, to go back to what happened. Charlie Whiting and his mother, who is the widow of Elmer Whiting, who was the son of old Squire Whiting of this town, has been visiting here the past month, from Worcester, and we have had great times making him do all the stunts we boys in the village are used to, but which he, being a city lad, is green to.

Charlie is a pretty good little chap and plucky but while he doesn't put on airs like some city boys, he is so white and genteel looking and his mother keeps him so spick and span all the time that we boys in the village are sure to get him into some scrape most every day, so that he will go home looking — well, more like the rest of us.

The first day he was here there was snow on the ground and we took him round to all the maple sugar camps, where we knew the farmers were sugaring off, and he ate so much sugar in all the

places, he got sick and we had to drag him on our sled.

My, wasn't he sick! Of course all the farmers, when they found he was Elmer Whiting's son, told him to pitch in and eat all the sugar he wanted, and of course Nate Wilson and I helped ourselves, too. But we were used to it, but Charlie wasn't and we kept stumping him to eat more. We would pour out a lot of the hot syrup on the snow and when it got hard and waxy we would roll up a great big gob and stump him to put it all into his mouth at once, and then we would stand round and laugh to see his teeth stick together.

Well, the first time he began to get a little sick, he laid down on some boards and pretended he wanted to take a little nap. I guess he really went to sleep, for we came back and found him that way, and we thought we would try a little trick that we had heard about among the men who sit up all night to boil sap.

We got some charcoal and rubbed it on the back of his hands, then we put a little syrup on his eyelids, and then sat back and tickled his nose

with a straw. Of course when he began to wake up and found his eyes feeling sticky, he rubbed them with his knuckles and by the time he was awake he was a sight to behold.

Well, all the week we had been doing things like that; and today we were running on the logs in the mill pond, and digging spruce gum.

This time of the year the pond is full of logs which have come down the river from the logging camps, and the gum softens in the sun so that we can scrape it out with our jackknives, and we make up large balls as big as your fist and take them to school.

When the teacher catches us chewing gum, she takes us by the ear and leads us up before the whole school, and makes us put it into the stove. And when she asks us if we have got any more gum, and makes us turn our pockets inside out, and perhaps searches our desk, the whole school is giggling because every scholar knows that a big ball of gum is being passed from one to another, and will be handed back to us as soon as we are ready for another chew.

Of course running on logs is a little bit danger-

ous, even for us boys who are used to it, for you can never tell just which logs may roll, and you have to jump pretty lively sometimes to escape duckings. Besides there are some pretty deep holes in the pond, and when the water is high there is quite a current.

We boys who are used to it don't think much about the danger for we know all the dangerous places, and I suppose it was pretty careless, on our part, to lead Charlie on as we did.

Well, Nate and I had been leading Charlie quite a race over the logs, sometimes leaving him quite a ways behind, and looking back and laughing to see him trying to balance himself on a rolling log or trying to get up courage to make the next jump, which might land him among a bunch of small logs where he would have to keep jumping lively from one to another to keep from sinking.

The last we saw of him he was balancing himself on some logs up by the deep hole near where the Dishmill brook comes in. We were a few rods down toward the mill where we were at work on a rich find of spruce gum. He was stooping

over looking between the logs and we think he must have been looking for the big trout that we had seen there the day before and tried to tempt with our bait.

We found the log with the gum and shouted for him to come on down and help us. We didn't get any answer, and finally, when we looked up, we couldn't see Charlie anywhere. At first we thought he must have gone ashore in the bushes. So we kept on shouting and next thing we knew, Charlie's cap bobbed up between some logs right near where we were standing. Well, you'd better bet we were scared. We knew mighty quick that Charlie had fallen in and was drifting down underneath the logs toward the dam.

The water is pretty swift right along there because the brook, at this season of the year, is swollen by the melting snow on the mountain to quite a torrent, and the current is felt quite a ways after it enters the pond.

Charlie couldn't swim much and it was awfully foolish of us to make him take such chances, and it all came over us in a minute, that we were

not much better than murderers unless we could do something quick to save him.

He might at this moment be floating under our feet, and we first off started looking down into the deep water between the logs. We could see the sand on the bottom and bits of twigs and leaves and sawdust floating along in the current, but no Charlie.

What we should have done, if we had seen him, I don't know, for it is awfully dangerous to get caught down under the logs, and the current sweeping you rapidly along toward the dam; but I guess either of us would have risked our lives, we felt so mean, and so sorry thinking of his mother and his old grandparents, and what all the villagers would say about us.

They say that a drowning person thinks of all that ever happened to him in an instant, and that all the sins he ever committed and everything come into his mind before he passes into eternity; but I guess the next thing to that is what goes through one's mind when he has been the cause of someone else drowning.

Then when we didn't see him between the logs or anywhere, I guess we did yell.

Bill Sykes down at the mill heard us and came running up on the logs with his spike-pole in his hands, and someone on the opposite bank shouted for a rope, but my! how the time sped and no signs of anything to give us any hope. We saw Bill a little ways off, stop and gaze toward the dam. We knew what that meant. The water was very high and in another minute we expected to see Charlie's body rise up and go over the dam and be dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

There was a boom made of logs fastened together end to end which ran from the other bank, kind of slanting, across the mill pond up to the sluice-way at the mill, and this kept the logs back from going over the dam. There was quite an open space of water between this boom and the dam and into this we were all gazing, realizing that there was little we could do, even if we should see the body, as anyone who jumped in here, even if he was an expert swimmer, would be most sure of being washed over the dam.

The blacksmith shop is just opposite the place

where the boom starts from the shore, and suddenly we saw Lige Golden running rapidly down to this point. By the time he reached it he had thrown away both of his shoes and his vest, and then he began running like a cat along the boom looking first one way and then another.

Pretty soon he stopped and looked back where the brook comes in, as if to find just the right place along the boom where the current of the brook would be taking the body. He looked down toward the dam, then up toward the brook, and began working up on the logs in that direction, peering down between them as he went.

Suddenly we saw him go down on his stomach across a log and the next instant the log rolled over, and him with it, head first into the water and out of sight. That was all we saw, not even a splash or any sign to show whether Elijah had fallen in by accident, or gone down after something he had seen.

I don't know how long we stood there, but it seemed an age. Somehow we felt "It's all over." Two or three other people had come up on the bank — and some teams on the road had stopped.

Everyone was looking where Elijah went in, and nobody knew what to do next.

Suddenly someone on the bank gave a shout and the next instant we heard a splash and a spluttering and there was Lige not more than two yards from the boom in the clear water, and he had Charlie in tow. Charlie lay all limp and white with his face up and Lige had him by the hair, and was swimming hard, with one hand, towards the logs. The current was against him and you could see at once that he couldn't make it and keep his hold on Charlie. He was drifting farther toward the dam every second.

We ran to the edge, but it was no use. Bill Sykes soon came up with his pole but by that time it would not reach. One of the men started to run back to his team for a rope, but it was plain that Lige and Charlie were now sweeping toward the dam so fast that nothing could save them.

Suddenly Lige stopped swimming and turned his head toward the dam. You could see that he realized his danger, and we thought he was giving up. We felt like closing our eyes but I guess some of us felt like praying too — but we couldn't

use much faith because we couldn't see any way out, even for the Lord to save him, unless he threw down a rope from heaven, and that wasn't likely according to what we knew about drowning accidents.

Well, when we looked again, Lige had begun to swim sideways — that is, across the current toward the other bank.

At first this seemed like he had lost his senses, for the bank was quite a long distance and he wasn't much more than ten feet from the edge of the dam. The water was so high it was sweeping along with tremendous force, and the roar, as it fell over on the rocks below, made us want to stop our ears.

But Lige was right. He knew just what he was doing and he took the one chance. Out there in the middle of the dam was a rock that could be seen in low water but now was just below the surface. It was sort of flat on top and didn't make much show in the high water, but if Lige could only reach it he might hold on till help came. Well, that was what he did.

For a minute I thought one or the other would

"Limp like, on the rock with their legs actually hanging over the falls"

be swept over but he managed to hook his free arm under the edge toward us while his body and that of Charlie were washed, limp like, up onto the rock with their legs actually dangling over the falls.

Gee! How he hung on to that boy! Lucky he had a good head of hair but I thought his scalp would be torn off. Lige finally got his legs about Charlie's body and got a better grip on his collar and then we knew they were safe, for the moment.

The rope came, and Lige first fastened it about Charlie's body, tying knots with one hand and his teeth, and when he thought it was secure, he gave, signal and we drew the body up on the logs. It was an awful sight to see, he was so limp and white — and kept turning over and over in the water as he was pulled along.

Lige was making frantic signs for us to hurry and we thought he was losing his grip, but when the rope reached him he didn't stop to tie it, but gave it a twist about one arm, plunged in and began to swim.

My! he almost made the rope slack in our hands as we hauled it in, he was such a powerful

swimmer. He bounced himself up on the logs and began running toward the shore where they had taken Charlie's body.

Someone ran ahead for the doctor, but Lige overtook those who had Charlie, and made them lay him down on the ground. He gave orders and everybody obeyed. He sent someone for brandy and told Nate and me to go over to the shop and take a horse blanket off Abe Gilson's horse and wrap it up tight to keep the heat in it.

We ran as fast as we could and when we came back, quite a crowd had collected and was standing about, but Lige made them all stand off a proper distance to give plenty of air, while two or three, that he had asked, were helping. They had Charlie on his back and some of his clothes were off and they were rubbing his legs and body while Lige was raising Charlie's arms up above his head and then slowly bringing them down to his sides and pressing on his chest. Every now and then Lige would turn the body over and lift it up by the hips so that the head would hang down, and the water would drip from the nose and mouth.

We spread out the blanket and Charlie was

wrapped up more or less, but the work went on just the same. Charlie didn't show any signs of life at all, and I guess most of us were thinking about the same, that it wasn't any use.

Then the doctor came up and tried to find Charlie's pulse and told Lige the case was hopeless. Lige didn't say a word but kept right on working and you could see that the doctor didn't know just where to fit in and was a little peeved that more respect wasn't paid to his judgment. He tried for a time to do something, but you could see he didn't think it was any use, and finally he stood back and after making some pretty discouraging remarks, turned and walked away, saying he would send Josh down after the body.

Well sir! Lige just got down on his knees over Charlie's body and we thought he was going to pray. Then he leaned way over and put his face down to Charlie's face and we thought he was going to cry — but pretty soon we could see that he was actually breathing his own breath down into Charlie's lungs.

We could see Charlie's chest rise and fall as

the breath would go down into him and then be pushed back by Elijah's hand on Charlie's stomach. And when the breath came out we would hear little gurgles and sounds like Charlie's voice that made us feel pretty queer, I can tell you.

Every once in a while after Lige had pressed the air out, he would straighten up a little and watch, as if he expected something to happen, and finally I guess it did, for we heard Lige say, "Thank God!"

Charlie actually had made a little gasp all by himself. This was the first sign we had seen of any life, and it wasn't very much, I can tell you, but Lige knew what it meant.

Well, he went to work again with his arms, and every now and then put his mouth down and blew into his lungs, but not so often, for pretty soon Charlie gave a little sigh and began to breathe quite regular. It was then for the first time Lige tried a little of the brandy on him, but not much, for he couldn't swallow very well, and Lige said it wasn't much use anyhow.

The sun came out quite hot and Lige said that was better than brandy. He let Charlie lie in the

sun, and kept rubbing him gently, first one place and then the other. Finally, after Charlie had opened his eyes and tried to speak, Lige rolled him up in the horse blanket and picking him up tenderly, like a mother does her baby, he started to carry him up towards Squire Whiting's house in the village.

That was when the boys and men let out a shout, and just then Josh Bean, the undertaker, came around the corner.

II

Sunday.

Today after church, Nate and I cut Sunday School and sneaked down to our little island, because we had so many things we wanted to talk over, all by ourselves.

The rescue of Charlie Whiting by Elijah Golden has been the talk of the whole town and today the minister preached about it and had most everybody crying, and I guess we felt we couldn't stand very much more.

We thought it would be a day of great rejoicing, but instead of that, after the sermon, everybody looked pretty solemn and we knew from past experience just what that would lead to in the Sunday School.

The minister said that such an episode should lead to a grate revival of religion in our town and knowing our part in getting Charlie into trouble, we felt sure they would begin on us the first chance they had. So we lit out.

The Dishmill brook flows down back of the church, and there is a little island where we boys

have camp fires and all sorts of good times. There is a plank across the stream on the side next the church, and we can go over, and pull the plank after us and then nobody is likely to disturb us unless they come down the brook from above. At this season, when the water is high, the roar of the brook makes so much noise we wouldn't be likely to hear anyone calling us.

This brook gets its name from an old mill at the head of the village where they used to turn out wooden dishes. There is not much left of the mill but the falls are still there, and the island is made by the water which was divided at the mill, part going over the falls and part going through a flume under the mill to turn the wheel, and coming out on the other side. Of course it is not really an island because anyone who would climb down over the rocks at the mill, would come out on the island. There are good trout in the pools below the falls, and we boys often fish down from there, on each side of the island, and the plank is placed near the foot of the island so we can get ashore.

The island is all grown up to alders and birches

and small spruce and is pretty thick around the edges, but up in the center toward the falls there is a place which is all gravel and rocks and surrounded by thick foliage, and it makes the best place ever for camp fires and pow wows.

* * * * * *

Well, to go back to yesterday. While Lige was bringing Charlie to life, I guess the news had spread that he was dead, for Mr. Hardiman, the minister, was talking to Charlie's mother on the porch when we came in sight.

Squire Whiting's home is up quite a steep hill, just out of the village, so I guess nobody had gone ahead to tell his mother the glad news that Charlie was saved, and most of the crowd had dropped back when we reached the hill, so there was just Nate and Elijah and I, as we came in sight.

Charlie was all wrapped up in the horse blanket, and it was wonderful to see how easily Lige carried him along up that steep hill, after his exertions.

Lige didn't seem the least bit tired and he was

talking and laughing, as if nothing had happened. I guess he was telling us about his experience in the South Sea Islands where he learned to swim under water, diving for pearls and corals and things.

It seems that he found Charlie caught by a snag and held down under the logs; and that was the only reason he had not been swept along over the dam before Elijah came. Lige saw him there and went down and untangled him, but as soon as he was loose, the current swept them below the boom before Elijah could get a good hold on a log. He said he grabbed at the boom log but the bark came off and he couldn't get a fresh grip.

We were so busy listening to Lige and so happy thinking of the good news we were bringing that I guess we didn't grasp the situation up at the house, and if we saw the tears in Mrs. Whiting's eyes we must have thought they were tears of joy.

The minister looked pretty solemn but we didn't think anything of that, being used to it, and Charlie's mother covered her face with her handkerchief as we passed between them through the open door.

Lige never said a word but was smiling all the time, as he walked straight through the parlor and into the parlor bedroom and laid Charlie on the bed. Mrs. Whiting followed and stood hesitating and wringing her hands in the doorway.

Charlie didn't open his eyes right away but lay so quiet and looked so pale that I guess Lige was a little worried for a minute, for he felt his pulse, and put his hand over Charlie's heart, then he turned and said, oh, so gently, but joyous, "Madame, thy son liveth."

At this Charlie's mother burst into sobs and started to throw herself on the bed, but Lige held her back gently with his strong arms. She didn't seem to hear anything we said for a minute or two while we tried to tell her the truth.

She kept weeping and crying out: "Oh, it's cruel! it's cruel! It's no use to tell me he's in heaven with his father. He was all I had. Why couldn't God have left him to me a little longer? I can't believe it is God's will. No, Mr. Hardiman, I can't, I can't. I know I'm rebellious, but I don't deserve it. What have I done? What have I done?"

Of course it all came to us what the minister had been saying to her, thinking Charlie was dead, and we felt stupid that we hadn't noticed the way it was, when we came up, and said something more appropriate.

But just then we didn't know what to say, for Charlie began to move a little and we were afraid the shock would kill her.

Lige saw it all pretty quick I guess, because he turned her face away, and up into his, and looked down with the most wonderful understanding look I ever saw on anybody's face, and said slowly and gently, "My dear friend, can you be strong for a moment, and believe every word I tell you? I shall not deceive you but tell you the truth, and you will be very happy."

Then he told her in a few simple words what he had done and how Charlie was saved. It was wonderful the effect Lige had on her, she became so calm all of a sudden, like as if he had cast a spell over her.

They had been standing in the doorway sort of blocking it and the minister was back in the parlor and couldn't see the bed but I guess he didn't

know what to do or say, and his face got kind of red when Lige was talking.

Then Lige led her over to the bedside and she kissed Charlie on the forehead and he opened his eyes and smiled, and about that time my eyes got kind of blurry for some reason, and I went out on the porch. Nate came, too, and as we passed the minister we heard him saying over as if to himself, "A miracle! a miracle! God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

But we, who had seen everything from the beginning, were thinking only of Lige Golden, and how he had risked his life for a boy he had never seen or heard of before he came here from Worcester; and I guess he had never seen Charlie's mother anyhow, because she didn't go out much except among her own set, and Lige was only a hired man in the Blacksmith Shop.

Afterwards, we came back down to the village, and Lige went over across the logs to pick up his hat and shoes, and then he went home I guess, and we hadn't seen a sign of him since.

After supper I staid in and wrote my diary,

and this morning I overslept and had just time to get ready for church.

So here we were, Nate and I, for the first time we had a chance to get together and we were wondering what had become of Lige, and if he got cold or anything, from his wetting.

We thought maybe we had better go up to Lige's house and see if he was all right, but we sat for a while on some logs we had arranged last fall about a place where we had a bon-fire and a corn roast.

It was the first time this spring we had been over to our island and it felt good, I can tell you. The sun came out warm on our backs, and the buds and green things were bursting forth everywhere and we could hear the roar of the falls and the chirping of the birds and everything, and it seemed such a relief to get away from all the solemn folks and the stuffy church with its high-backed pews and the sound of the wheezy old organ, and the choir in the gallery, and the prayers and benediction and all that, so we just heaved a sigh of relief and sat for a while without saying much of anything.

Lige was living by himself in a little lonesome old house about a quarter of a mile above the mill known as the Aunt Sarah Woods place. Until Lige took it, we didn't care to go very near that region because it was said to be haunted by the ghost of old Aunt Sarah who had lived there alone for many years and who was found dead in bed after she had been lying there for nobody knows how long and was found by Joe Peneau, a Frenchman who happened to go by and look in the window. When Lige came, he wanted to get a place where he could board himself and as he wasn't afraid of ghosts he took the place, and has lived there ever since.

As I said before, Lige has some queer notions, and some of them are about food. Most of the farmers live on salt pork and potatoes, and Lige, after trying the fare at Ezra Kimball's for a week, decided he rather cook his own food, and when he took the haunted house we didn't blame him much, that is, if he could get along with the ghost. But us boys couldn't get over our feelings, in spite of the fact that Lige had been there quite a long time now and nothing had happened. I

don't think Lige had been troubled much with callers so far, and although we had been getting pretty well over our *belief* in the stories we had heard, we had not been in the house, and still felt a little creepy when we thought of it, not knowing just what we might see there.

They say, too, that Lige has a lot of idols and queer things that he has brought from different parts of the world, and some books on magic and black art and spirit mediums and all that, and it has made quite a good deal of talk in the village since Jim Hunter called there one day for a drink of water and reported what he saw.

But I must come back to where we were sitting there in the sun, on the logs around the old camp fire.

We talked over the accident quite a spell, and how it all happened, and how mean we felt when we thought Charlie was lost; and then we got to talking about Lige and his wonderful strength and how he could stay down under the water and do things that nobody else in the village would ever think of doing.

Then we got to thinking about what happened

up at the house, and the look on the minister's face when Lige told Charlie's mother he wouldn't deceive her, but would tell her the *real truth*.

"Wonder if that was why Mr. Hardiman gave Lige such a slight in his sermon?" Nate asked.

I hadn't thought of it before, but it came over me all at once, what the minister must have thought: that Lige was sort of giving him a little rap over Mrs. Whiting's shoulder for telling her that Charlie was in heaven, and that it was all God's will.

Of course it wasn't God's will for Charlie to be drowned, or he wouldn't have let Lige pull him out and bring him back to life, and if it really was God's *intention* to take Charlie to heaven, what was Lige doing but trying to defeat the will of the Almighty?

Nate and I discussed this quite a while but we didn't seem to get anywhere, then we began to discuss some of the things Mr. Hardiman said in his sermon.

Mr. Hardiman seemed to think it was all a case of divine providence anyhow, but we thought he

ought to have given Lige a little more credit for the splendid work he done.

He said that God sometimes used very humble means for the carrying out of his purposes, and in this case he had employed one who wasn't even a professed Christian.

But, he said, it was God who really saved the boy after all, because He, in his infinite wisdom, knowing all things from the beginning, had placed the rock in that mill pond just so that, when the time came, the struggling, drowning souls would find a place to cling. This rock should symbol to us the rock of ages to which we must cling if we wished to be saved from the abyss over which we were all dangling, like Lige and Charlie were dangling over the falls and the rocks below.

He said that Jehovah had decreed that we must all die in our sins, but that Jesus was sent to be our rock of ages, and it was only by clinging to him that we could be saved from eternal suffering in the bottomless pit. He said this was the plan of salvation, and we could not reject it without

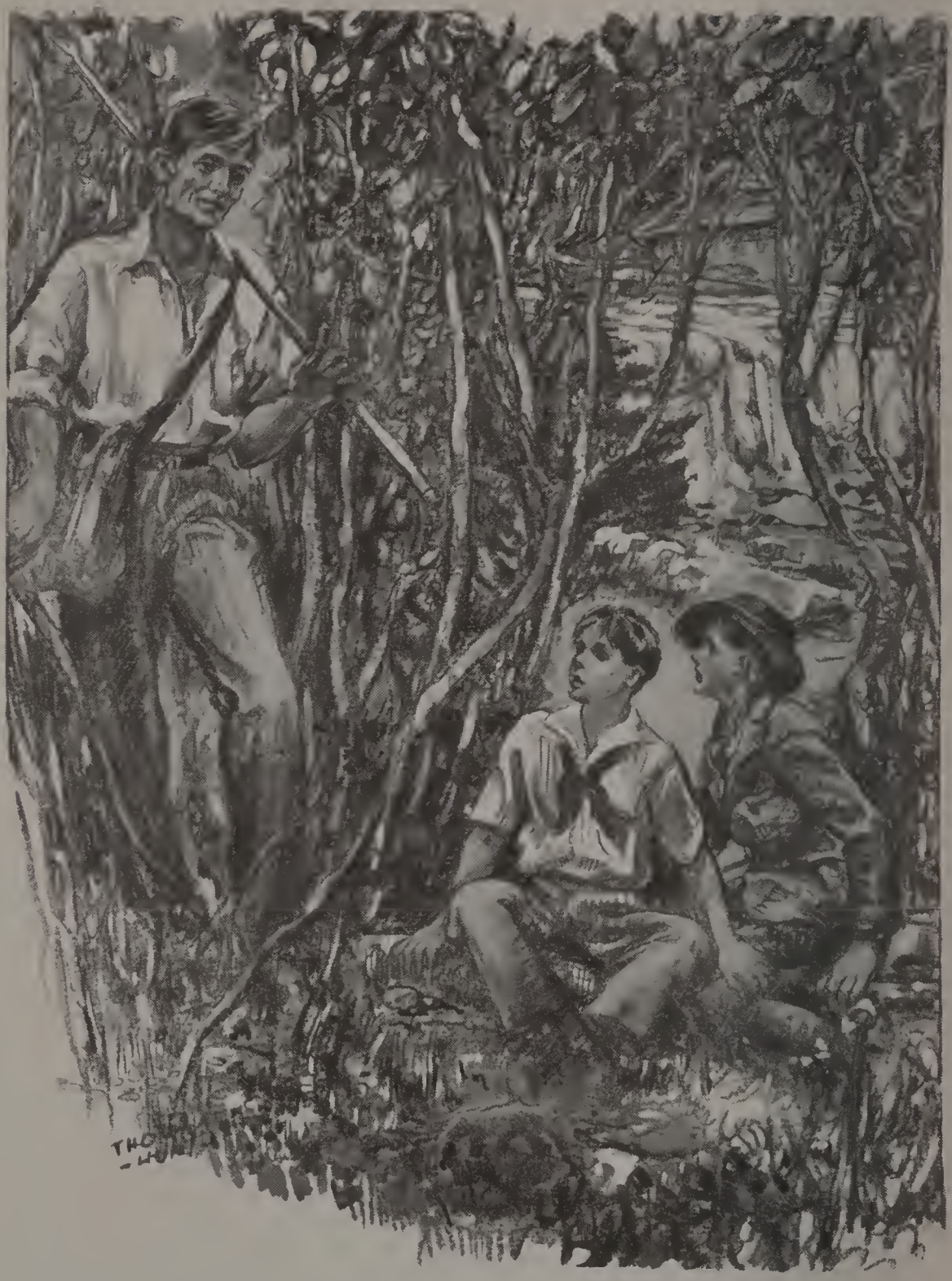
losing our souls, which were much more important than our bodies.

Of course we had heard most of this before, and we had never doubted it was true, till this morning, but when we remembered how Lige had risked his life, and how he had hung on to Charlie, even when he knew that by letting go, he could have reached the boom, we thought Lige was more like Jesus, than the rock was; and we thought Mr. Hardiman was mighty mean that he didn't say so, instead of referring to him as "one outside the fold."

Mr. Hardiman said it had all happened to teach us the great lesson of God's love and the rock of ages, and to warn us of our danger before it was too late.

Then the choir sang "Cling to the rock," but we were thinking all the time that, that was just what Lige did; and we couldn't see why he should be held up as one who was in danger of God's wrath instead of a savior, as he really was.

"Well, I'm going to cling to Lige, anyhow, instead of old Hardiman," Nate blurted out, and before the words were out of his mouth, the



"Smiling as if he hadn't a care in the world"

bushes rustled behind us and when we looked back, startled like, there was the face of Lige Golden himself, smiling as if he hadn't a care or worry in the world.

"So you're going to cling to me instead of Mr. Hardiman" he laughed. "Well, if it's another case of getting into the pond you better make sure I'm handy by. It was just pure chance that I looked out of the shop window, when I did, and saw that boy fall in. Another time he might not be so lucky."

"Then you don't believe it was divine providence," I said.

"Which?" he asked. "His falling in or my pulling him out?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I suppose maybe both," but I had never thought of it that way before. Then I added, "Mr. Hardiman didn't put it that way. He said it was the rock."

Lige laughed right out at this and asked, "Did he say anything about the snag?"

"What snag?"

"Why the snag that caught Charlie's clothes, and held him under, till I came. Did he think

that had been placed there by divine providence too?"

This was a poser, because it didn't seem so natural, somehow, to think of God putting snags in the river, as it did to think he put the rock there. One could talk about the *rock* of ages in a sermon, but I don't believe it would have sounded half so well if Mr. Hardiman had said the same things about a *snag*, and yet we knew that if it hadn't been for the snag, that held Charlie back, he would have floated right down past the rock and over the dam before anybody could save him. I suppose he could have been caught by the rock, but it didn't look very likely, especially as it took all Lige's strength to keep from going over the falls.

Lige didn't say anything more about divine providence, just then. He came out of the bushes, and then we saw that he had an alder fish pole in his hand and a fish basket slung over his shoulder.

He came up and sat down on a log and opened the basket and showed us the most wonderful catch of speckled beauties we had seen for a long

time. My! Whatever you say about Lige Golden, you've got to admit he is some fisherman!

I guess we forgot for a moment it was Sunday, for he began to divide up the trout into three piles and we had visions of taking home enough for a feast for the whole family.

"Lucky I met you boys" he said, "for I never could eat all these myself and I was wondering what to do with them."

He told us that he woke up early and felt kind of restless, after the excitement of yesterday, so he had gone on a long tramp up on the side of the mountain and then he *happened to think* he would fish the brook all the way back. He looked kind of funny when he said this — and his eyes twinkled a bit as if he expected us to say something, but I didn't think till afterwards what he had on his mind, but I guess now he expected we'd ask him how he "happened" to have his fish basket and bait and things.

That is just like Lige, he always seems to enjoy a joke on himself better than on anybody else, and he will sometimes act real disappointed if folks aren't bright enough to get the point. But

instead, Nate suddenly looked up and exclaimed, "We can't take 'em home, Lige, it's Sunday."

"Why that's so," Lige said, "I never thought of that either. Of course you can't take 'em home Sunday, — your father is deacon of the Baptist Church."

We looked kind of crestfallen, but Lige spoke up cheerful like and said, "I'll tell you, boys, how we can do some real good with them, even if it is Sunday. Phil Shackford has been on a drunk all the week and I'll bet his big family of hungry children will never raise any question of religion about eating those trout. And if his children can't eat 'em, he's got cats enough that will."

At this we all laughed and began to put the trout back in the basket.

Speaking of food had reminded us it must be time for dinner and we thought we'd better get home before we were missed, anyhow.

But we sat still a little longer and told Lige some of the things Mr. Hardiman had said in his sermon, and how he had sort of made as little as he could about Lige's noble and heroic deed, — and his being out of the fold and all that.

We thought it would make Lige angry, and we wouldn't have blamed him a bit, but Lige sat calm through it all and didn't seem a bit put out.

Instead, he acted kind of dreamy like and once he spoke up as if he was talking to himself:

"Have I been so long a time with you and you have not known me, Philip?"

Mr. Hardiman's first name is Philip, so we thought of course Lige meant him, but we didn't know they were old acquaintances, and then when we asked him, he started up suddenly and said, "Oh, I was thinking of someone else."

Lige roused himself, after a while, and we started down toward the end of the island but we got a chance to ask Lige one or two more questions as we walked along. He said that maybe he didn't know as much about divine providence as Mr. Hardiman, and perhaps it was too big a subject for us to settle all at once. Then he was thoughtful a minute before he said slowly:

"If God is an *Infinite Being*, how can we, with our little minds, expect to see Him all at one time and all in one place — in this world or in any other?"

He said he thought it was better to see something of God every day, as we went along, and he expected there would be enough of God to last him all his life if he should live forever.

It was the same way about God's purposes. All he could make out was, that the laws of nature were harmonious, and that there couldn't be two Gods, or two Purposes, or the worlds would fall apart. Then, if there was only one *great* purpose in the universe, *life must be one great harmony.*

But the fellow in the band who played nothing but a drum could never get the full sense of the music unless he stopped beating it for a while and took a seat in the audience.

When we asked him what he meant, he was quiet for a minute, gazing at the clouds, and then, turning his eyes to ours he asked,

"Did you ever lie on your back on the top of the mountain on a beautiful star-lit night and listen to the music of the spheres?"

That was what he meant by getting out of the band for a time and into the audience.

But on the other hand it was very important

that we learn to play our part well, and not be trying all the time to play like somebody whose instrument worked on a different plan from our own.

Nate asked him about heaven, and he said he couldn't see much use in thinking of heaven as some *place* where everybody would be happy with the same things, and it wasn't a matter of possessing things at all. It was just learning to be happy anyhow, whether you had things or not.

It was a lot more important, he thought, to learn to give up. And if there was any one thing we thought we couldn't be happy without, until we got it somehow, it would be better not to try for that thing at all, but try something else instead.

He said that if we once got the right idea, then, the things we wanted would come along as a matter of course. But, staking all our happiness on getting some one thing was like putting all our eggs in one basket. The bottom might fall out.

Then he stopped suddenly, for we had reached the plank, and while we were putting it across, he

opened his fish basket and appeared to be searching among the trout.

"By the way, boys," he said, "did you lose anything yesterday?"

We felt in our pockets and Nate shouted, "Yes, my pearl handled penknife I got for Christmas."

"See what I caught under the falls," he said as he held up a beautiful half pounder by the gills. "He was trying to jump the falls and I guess he was so heavy he couldn't get to the top. He was like a lot of folks who eat too much, I guess." And as he said this, he turned the trout over and held him up by the tail, and what do you think? Nate's penknife fell right out of its mouth on the ground.

"Lucky I went fishing this morning," Lige laughed, as Nate picked up his knife, too surprised to speak. "I guess I'd better go back the way I came. Folks might be shocked at my haul of fishes if I went through the town, and I can leave some at Phil's house on my way up by the mill, without attracting too much attention."

Then he looked back once more and his eyes twinkled: "See that thou tellest no man—about

the miracle, I mean," and he disappeared among the bushes.

We looked after him for a minute or two and then Nate said: "I think Lige Golden is the most wonderful person that ever lived!"

We looked down at Nate's knife which he was still holding in his hand and wondered if it was really a miracle or just one of Lige's tricks.

III

Lige is different from any person we ever saw. I'll bet if he was asked to teach a Sunday School class, he'd begin by taking a piece of string or something out of his pocket and doing a trick; or right in the most serious part of the lesson his eyes would begin to twinkle and you would know that something funny had struck him deep down and he couldn't wait to get it out of his system.

And yet Lige is always teaching serious lessons. He can look awful solemn too, but his eyes somehow make one think of a deep spring, with every now and then little bubbles of light coming up to the surface, through the dark water.

We asked him about it one noon hour when he was eating his lunch on the logs down back of the shop. We asked him why he was so different from Mr. Hardiman and Deacon Withers and other serious minded folks we knew, and he said he guessed it was because his mother was a daughter of joy, and his father was one of the solemn kind. He said he knew his mother was gay from her picture, but he wasn't quite sure

about his father; because the only picture he had of his father was the one inside himself.

We thought by that, Lige must have been an orphan sometime, but he went right on telling us a lot of things about ourselves and everybody, so we didn't get a chance to ask him any more just then.

He said we all had two persons inside of us and often it was two persons who couldn't agree very well on the outside, but that was a good thing because it was always making us try and settle difficulties on the inside which seemed too hard to ever get settled on the outside. If a father and mother were too much alike — or relations — the child would be more apt to be stupid just because the parents hadn't handed him down any difficulties for his mind to work on. So we could see the good of having difficulties.

Lige sees good in everything, and that seems to be his worst fault, because he goes round in all sorts of company and that gives him a bad name with the church people.

Mr. Hardiman has warned us boys more than once not to take too much stock in what Lige

says because, as near as he can make out, Lige has no sense of good and evil. When we told Lige, he laughed right out and then said, "Would Mr. Hardiman like me better if I ate more forbidden fruit?" That answer puzzled us till Lige explained what he meant and then it looked quite reasonable, but different of course from what we had been taught.

He said that the story of Adam and Eve must have been told to show one thing which was always true in life. If you will call everything good, God will walk in the garden of your soul and that will be paradise — but if you get the idea that everything has to be either all good or all bad, you get fussed up inside and lose your faith in the one purpose. And that was just what happened in the story of the garden of Eden, according to Lige.

Well anyhow, it seems to make Lige different, and he goes with everybody and doesn't get riled up and is always the same, though, as I say, his jolly side gets mixed up with his solemn side and he seems to enjoy one side as much as the other.

That's why, maybe, he loves to talk with folks

like Maggie Gillis, which Dad says never was more than half baked. Old Maggie lives down at the end of the village and Lige often stops there for water on his way from work and will sit at the well and talk sometimes for hours and forget to go home to supper.

Maggie is Irish by birth and I guess she used to be some kind of a Catholic. But when Jack Gillis left her with a small baby, the Methodist church had to take care of her, for there wasn't a church of her kind anywhere round. She goes out doing housework — and takes in washings and Lige brings her his mending and gets her to cook up things for him.

I guess he likes to hear her talk, and Lige says he can get more religion from her than he can by hearing Mr. Hardiman preach, in spite of the fact that she is always getting her scripture mixed up in such a way that one has to laugh even in church. She'll get to going on in prayer meeting till Mr. Hardiman has to give out a hymn or something to shut her off.

One time she began like this, "Oh Lord, I was the chiefest of sinners," and Josh Bean shouted,

"Yes, Glory Hallelujah!" Well, everybody snickered, but she didn't see the joke and went right on, "But sense I've been washed in the blood of the lamb, I am the fairest among ten thousand, the bright and morning star, and the one altogether lovely." Then, when Mr. Hardiman gave out the hymn, "Wash me in the blood," Nate and I thought we would fall off our seats.

Then Lige has been trying to teach Maggie's son to walk. He was born a cripple, and kind of half witted, so nobody ever took any interest in him and he had never taken a step for 18 years, but Lige seems to be getting on with him wonderful. And he's teaching him his alphabet, too.

That makes me think of Carrie Finny's case. Lige has the queerest ideas about sickness. He thinks lots of folks are sick because they don't want to be well, or don't want to hard enough.

Carrie had been ailing ever since her father died, and couldn't eat or do anything, without getting sick headaches. Well, Lige cured her the first week he was here, though Dr. Rush had been doctoring her for years.

Lige said Dr. Rush was all right, as far as he

went, but that Carrie was putting three kinds of poison into her system that Dr. Rush couldn't take out with all his physic. When we asked Lige what the poisons were, he said they were the poisons of griefs, regrets, and fears, and that nobody could be well if he was putting those poisons into his system all at one time.

When we asked him how he did it, he laughed and said he didn't do it at all, he just "forgave her her sins." That sounded funny because Carrie had professed sanctification ever since the holiness camp meeting three years ago. Well, anyhow, he said if Dr. Rush had been able to tell her what was *really* the matter with her she would have cured herself long ago, without taking pills — and she wouldn't have been so resigned to evil, like she had been all those years.

Of course saying things like that about the doctor gets Lige kind of in wrong with the best people, and it's the same way with the minister, although Lige seems to treat everybody just alike when it comes to telling them what he thinks is true.

IV

Sunday, June.

Today, after church, we went as usual to the cemetary. Father said he wasn't feeling very well and he guessed he'd stay at home and read his Bible. But mother and aunt May went along and they took some flowers from the bed in the front yard to put on the graves of grandpa and grandma and uncle Edmand, and little brothers Harry and Carrol who died before I was born.

Harry was the first baby in our family and I guess he made quite an impression on Dad. Somehow Dad never likes to go to the cemetary. He says it makes him sad, and I guess he doesn't like to be sad like mother and the rest. Harry was five when he died and he was such a bright child that God took him with diptheria. Father said he prayed that if he had another boy he would be dull, and I'm the result.

My, but prayer is grate! I wish sometimes however that god didn't make me quite so dull, especially when I get licked in school for not knowing my lessons.

Of course Carrol came along after Harry, but he only got to be a little over a year old and then he had the colery and fantum, and God took him, so I guess he was started too bright, or else dad hadn't prayed right — or hadn't had enough faith or something.

Mother always cuts flowers for the graves Sunday morning, and if there are enough, she takes some to the church, or to some sick people; but if there are only a few she always saves them for the graves. I hate to have them all cut Sundays, they look so nice against the white cottage where we live — and Mondays it looks more dismal.

Today there were not many, because the season has been so backward, so I told her to let Nate go along with me and we would go down in the woods, back of the cemetary and find some May-flowers.

There is a wonderful dark woods down back of the cemetary, kind of damp and smelly, and sometimes Nate and I go there week days and play smugglers. There is an old vault there where we smuggle in food, and when the folks are sitting around the graves and it gets pretty dismal, we

make to wander off reading epitafts till we get down back of a monument or something, then we beat it.

Well, today that's what we done. We didn't find much in the woods so we kept wandering further and further down, till we came to the edge of the cemetary grounds where the sun begins to streak in over the wall from the fields below.

We knew there were lots of dasys and buttercups in this field, and though we wasn't supposed to go outside the cemetary on our Sunday excursions, we thought it would be all right, seeing as we hadn't any thing much for the graves, to just step over for a few minutes, and get what we wanted.

Well, we had gathered quite a bunch which we thought would be nice for the folks, when we spied something that looked like a human being lying in the grass quite a ways off, and we thought maybe some one had had a sunstroke, or laid out over from Saturday night, drunk. Phil Shackford and Bill Lawrence are the town drunkards, and sometimes they don't show up after getting paid on Saturday night till Sunday evening, af-

ter church time, and anyhow, we thought we ought to investigate.

We felt kind of creepy, too, just coming from the grave yard and talking about dead people. Maybe the party was dead; and if we felt sure he was a dead person, you bet we'd have run a mile. That's foolish of course, when we'd sat on graves and eaten lunches in vaults and all that, but a fresh dead party seems sort of different from one underground a long while. Anyhow we crept up pretty cautious, feeling like we might turn and run any minute.

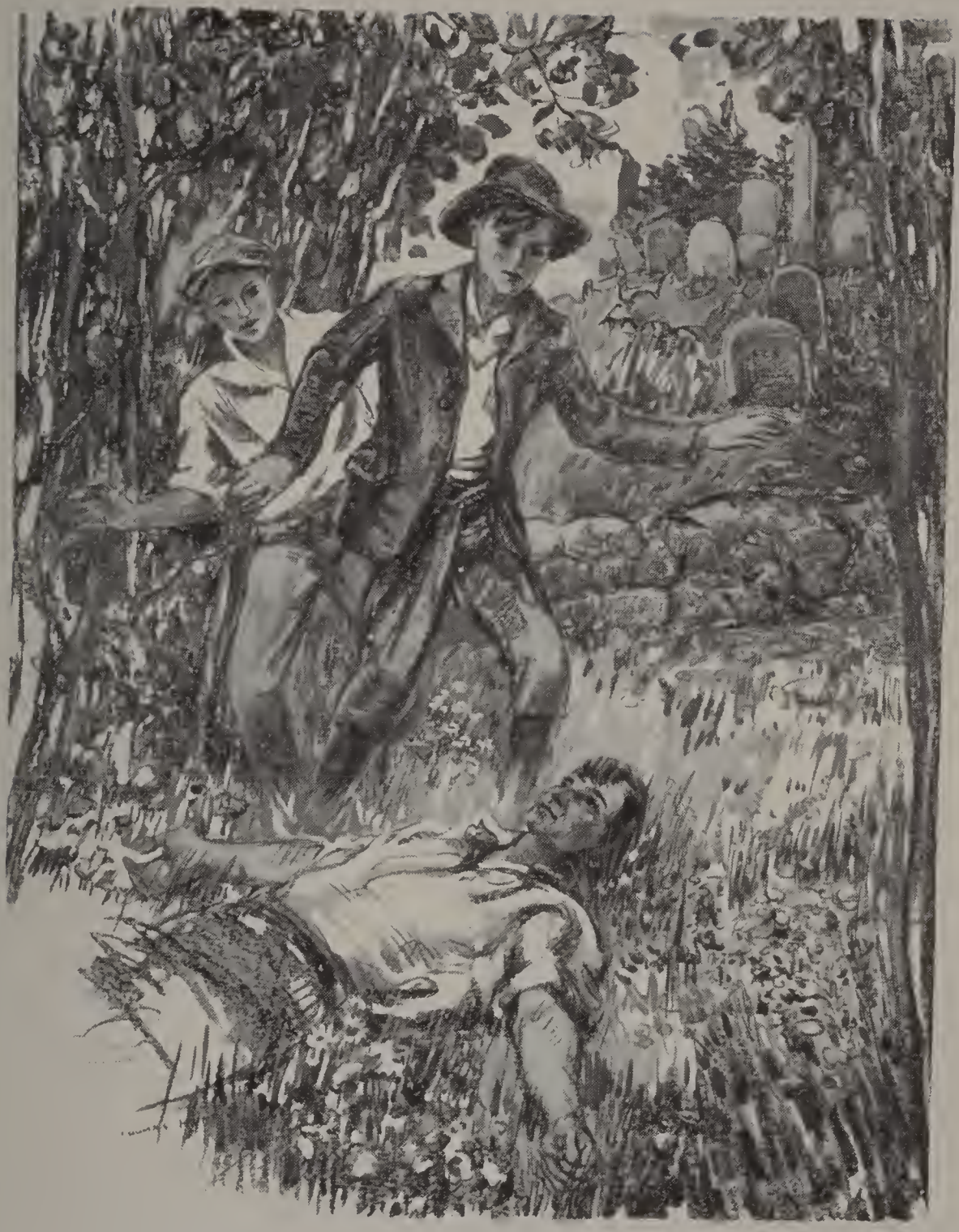
Whoever it was, he was lying there in the tall grass on his back, and the hot sun was beating down on him, as if he didn't know enough to get up and go where it was shady. We got pretty close before we discovered that his eyes were wide open, and that it was our old friend Lige Golden. He laid just as still, all spralled out, like he had the worst kind of a jag on, and didn't seem to notice us at all, but kept gazing with that far away look, we had noticed once or twice before. We couldn't make out whether he was in some kind of a trance, or whether he was sick or dead or

something, so we just stood there gaping, and wondering what to do.

Well, we stood there what seemed quite a long time, but I suppose it wasn't more than a minute or two; but I guess it seemed long because we were thinking so many things, like one who is drowning. And this is a curious thing about Elijah. He has just that effect on you at times when he isn't talking at all. So we waited.

We looked at him, then at each other, then both began looking off into space, same as he was. We didn't see anything but the blue sky overhead, but when we looked back he was smiling so we knew he wasn't dead.

Dead people don't smile that way,—that is, till after the undertaker comes. I know, for I saw aunt Jane who died at our house, and I sneaked in and looked over the foot board, when they didn't see me, for every body was standing about the bed crying. Her jaw had dropped down and her false teeth were sticking out and — well she looked just awful. But at the funeral she was fixed up beautiful and her cheeks were powdered or painted or something, and everybody said she



"He was smiling so we knew he wasn't dead"

looked so natural, and how nice that she died with a smile on her face, like she was just going to speak. I suppose that was all right too, but I don't think the smile was natural, as she used to smile on us children when she came to visit us, and brought us candy and things. Perhaps it was because aunt died at our house instead of at her home in Northfield and our undertaker, while a good man in his line, didn't know aunt Jane as we knew her.

Well, to get back to Elijah. He smiled that wonderful smile of his'n when he has something interesting to tell, and we smiled back and said, "Hello Lige!"

Then we hemed a little, for he didn't answer right off quick, an Nate stammered out, "We thought you was intoxicated."

"I am," he replied, without moving a muscle, "lie down with me and have a drink."

Well, if you had hit us with a straw you could have knocked us both down, we were so surprised and weak in the legs. We knew Elijah was a temperance man, at least we never saw him drunk, although he did drink some wine once at

the wedding of Jack Bowker; and most everybody but him got pretty full, and he was criticised for going with that bunch over at Burdon Corners. But he kept on going, and they do say, there aint anything like the goings on there that there used to be.

Well, we just laid down there in the grass, as if we expected to have a regular spree, and he didn't offer us anything to drink at all. We waited quite a spell, and I suppose it was the hot summer sun or something that made us feel so wonderful relaxed and contented.

It was so quiet that pretty soon we began to hear the bees buzzing round, and the flies, and the grass-hoppers, and the grass waving, and the soft wind through the leaves, and the tinkle of a cow bell, off somewhere, and way down toward the village was the rattle of a carriage, and the beat of the horse's hoofs on the road, but all so far away that it didn't seem real at all, and it mixed in with all the other soft noises about us, and we kept lying there till everything seemed more like a dream than anything else.

And then we began to watch the clouds over-

head, and they took on the most wonderful shapes, like faces, and fairies, and chariots and everything, and then a cloud would come across the sun and make the place we was lying in all cool and shady. And pretty soon the shady place would begin to move off down the hill — and over the valley; and the river which had been all sparkling would become dark, and then we would watch the shadow creep up toward Burdon Mountain in the east, and the mountain would look dark and severe, and then light up again, like the face of Elijah did, when he began to smile.

I don't know why it was that neither of us spoke for a long time, but I guess it was one of those spells which people say Elijah casts over folks. If it *was* a spell, I don't think there was any great harm in it, although it seemed so wonderful, and so different from what we had been used to on Sundays, but we forgot all about the folks back there at the graves, and didn't think about them for a long time after, for just then Elijah began to wake up, or come out of his intoxicated condition, or trance or whatever it was.

And that's the only harm of the spell, as I can see, that it made us forget.

And the things he talked about, made us forget our duty to our parents and to the dead ones in the cemetary, — although after a time we did think about them, but we kept right on talking, till the sun went down behind the hill, and the light on the mountain came out wonderful and the sky was glorious; and by the time we reached the village it was quite dark, and the folks were all worried, and mother thought I ought to get a whipping.

Father took me out back of the shed to find a shingle, and we sat down on the woodpile, and I explained quite a good deal, and told him some of the things Elijah said, and finally dad lighted his pipe to keep off the mosquitoes and we had a pretty good talk. Dad said if I would stay in, after school, for a week and write down all I could remember about what Elijah said, he would let that go as my punishment, although to please ma, he would lick me just a little, and I could tell her I got the licking. He hit me once or twice with a little stick no bigger than a pencil, and I

let out a howl like I was most killed; then we both laughed, and I ran up to my room, so mother wouldn't see how happy I was feeling — and began to write my diary.

This is Tuesday and I've been writing this three nights already. I've still got a lot more to write so I'll go to bed and try and think out the best way to write down those things which Elijah said. Some things I can write down quite easy but not all the things he said are quite as easy to explain the meaning of. Dad thinks this is good practice, and hopes I'll make a writer some day like Shakspear or Milton or Robinson Cruso.

In some ways dad reminds me of Elijah. He's kind of easy like, and I think he understands boys better than mother, who always wanted a girl. But dad's prayers got the better of her that time. Maybe dad is afraid if he licks me too much, he'll make me smart, and then I'll not be long for this world.

* * * * * * *

That is a joke, but I didn't think of it till the next day, so I guess I'm dull enough to live a while longer.

My, but as Elijah says, "ain't life wonderful!"

V

Wednesday.

Life. That's just what Lige was talking most about last Sunday when we lay on the grass.

Some of the things he said I guess had a dark meaning like "Let the dead bury the dead." He looked pretty dark, too, when he said it, and he looked up at the cemetary, as if he meant something about my folks that he didn't want to say right out. Perhaps, though, he knew something about some of the dead ones that he didn't want to explain for he brightened up in a minute and began talking about the lillies of the valley, two or three of which we had picked in the woods. They were lying there wilted in the sun and he picked one up and sort of petted it like it was a poor sick animal he wanted to nurse back to health. "Poor thing," he said, trying to make it hold up its head, "how it wanted to live, and to grow into the likeness of God and now it isn't even fit to adorn a grave! How much it tried to express!"

I didn't know before that a flower wanted to do

anything at all, but what he said made me feel real sorry that we hadn't left it where it could go on to express the "divine image" that he said was in each seed. He said that folks were just like plants — that way — each of us started from a seed and in each seed was a perfect pattern of what we were intended to become.

We answered up that some folks we knew must have had a pretty poor pattern, judging by the lives they led, Bill Lawrence for instance, who never done an honest days work, that he didn't squander it on rum or women or something and neglected his large and growing family something scandalous, and had to be helped by the church and was always getting religion and getting prayed for, and then going out and committing his sins all over again.

"He's a lilly all right," Nate blurted out, "but not the kind you mean, I guess."

"Yes, just the kind I mean," Elijah said — and he never smiled. "Bill has a good heart. He has the germ — the seed — the pattern, just the same as all the rest."

"See," he said as he pointed out a small tree

down by the wall, "do you notice how that sappling is bent around that big rock? That tree started with the same kind of pattern as the straight tall oak down yonder. What made it grow crooked? Was it any fault in the pattern, or the life principle? No, it started the same. It wanted to do the same. It wanted to unfold into a perfect tree. When it struck that rock it couldn't keep on living and growing if it insisted on growing straight just like the other tree. It couldn't grow straight in the place where it was, so rather than give up and die it grew crooked. Anything wrong in that? Does the tree deserve to be punished?

"Here, look down in that pasture. There are a lot of other oaks. Scrubs we call them. What makes them scrubs? Same seed. Same pattern. Same divine impulse. Barren soil. And if you'll look, you'll find that the life principle has caused little rootlets to pass out from the seed, in every direction, looking in vain for those ingredients which are necessary to make up a perfect tree.

"Look at that big oak over in the meadow. Fertile soil. Don't have to go far for what it

needs and the roots can go down deep where there is plenty of water."

Then he said something about "living water, that if a man drink of it he shall never thirst." I remembered the exact words for I had it in Sunday School as a *golden* text, and it seemed so funny that it took a man by the name of *Golden* to explain it to me. My Sunday School teacher didn't make much out of it, but I guess she didn't know much about nature, being only a farmer's wife.

Well, anyhow, he said Bill Lawrence hadn't been cultivated right. The great magician hadn't come along yet who understood what ingredients was lacking. Maybe Bill drank just because he had such a fine nature that he couldn't stand up under the strain of life without a stimulant, and he made the mistake of thinking whiskey was a stimulant. He said whiskey puts you to sleep and makes you dead to the world, and has at least the advantage sometimes of keeping one from suicide, until one got religion, or something to take the place of it.

I was wondering what that something was, that

could take the place of whiskey and religion. Knowing that Elijah was not a church member, I began to think that was what he had been taking that afternoon, that made him so quiet before we came up, and he told us about being intoxicated. He didn't act like anyone who was drunk either, but I didn't dare ask, for fear that he might think I thought he was a dope fiend or something like that.

I guess he must have read my thoughts, for he looked far away for a minute, and then he said, kind of quizzical like — "Perhaps you think I've had food or drink which ye know not of, but honest indian, I was only intoxicated with the day. Isn't it immense up here?" Then he stood up and let out a regular war whoop as if to wake the dead.

That was when I first thought of the folks back there, and the cemetary, and the fact that it was Sunday and all that. We had never heard any one give a war whoop on Sunday before, and we were shocked and frightened half out of our wits. That is what makes Elijah so queer even to us boys who know him so much better than the rest

of the villagers. He is always doing such startling and unexpected things,—and *why* he would do such a thing on Sunday eve, right on the border of the cemetary is more than either Nate or I can explain.

We looked every which way, for something to happen and then he must have read our thoughts again, for he turned and looked toward the cemetary and we all three stood there as if we expected somebody to come walking down out of their graves. It was getting dark and I knew the folks must have gone home without us so I didn't worry on that score. Then just as if there was nothing to prevent, he gave another whoop and listened for the echo to come back to us from over the wall.

"Never mind," he said "Its no use!"

"What's no use?" I asked in a whisper.

"They won't wake up, though the stones cry out!"

We turned toward the village and it seemed as if the stones under our feet cried out all the way, for every little noise startled us, and I suppose it

was our guilty conscience telling us that we had been desecrating God's holy day.

Elijah said a lot more things but I'm too tired now to write any more. I'm going to say my prayers — good and regular, and go to bed. I wonder if Elijah says his'n. I'm going to ask him sometimes, because it took some courage anyhow to let out a yell like that on a Sunday night near a cemetary. I don't know anyone else who would have dared, not even the minister and I'm sure Bill Lawrence wouldn't, even in his drunkest moments.

VI

Friday.

I asked Elijah yesterday if he ever said his prayers and he gave me the strangest answers ever. First off he laughed right out, and when I said I didn't see anything in prayers to laugh about he laughed all the more, and asked why he shouldn't laugh and pray at the same time? I told him I thought it would be sacreligious and he answered "Would it be sacreligious for a monkey to laugh when he saw a big fine cocanut tree full of ripe cocanuts about suppertime?"

Then he laughed some more and just then Deacon Withers passed by on the other side on his way to the Friday night prayermeeting. He looked round at us terrible solemn like, when he heard Lige laughing, and you could see that he thought we ought to be going to prayermeeting.

Lige stopped laughing and watched the deacon hobbling up the street toward the church, and then, after a minute or two, I got up courage enough to ask him if he thought it was right to make fun about prayers.

He looked at me with that queer look of his, eyes kind of twinkly, and yet sort of sad, and finally he spoke in a dreamy kind of way —

"Don't you think its funny, the way Deacon Withers has been praying every morning, noon and night, all his life, and then going round without *expecting* anything good? Honest now, just think of it. There isn't a day that he doesn't pray for the salvation of the heathens, and the feeding of all the hungry people everywhere, not to mention the conversion of every sinner in the village, by name, and then he goes about with his face all drawn down and his jaw set as if he was convinced that none of the nice things he was asking for could ever possibly come true.

"Why, even Phil Shackford in his worst moments has more excuse for praying than the old deacon. The deacon owns mortgages on half the town, and he could have almost anything he wanted without praying at all, and as for feeding the starving world and converting the heathern, the deacon was only passing the buck when he asked the Almighty to do it. It made the deacon feel better of course, because it eased him up a bit,

and you could see by his face, he lived under an awful strain, because he had never really learned to expect something nice to happen."

"That was real faith — expecting *good* instead of expecting *evil*. When one expects something good doesn't it make him feel good? Well I guess."

"But Phil, when he had had one of his despondent spells, and taken liquor, thinking it would help him, and then, after he had come to, and found he'd been in a fight and he was all beat up and had a headache and a sick stomach, and looked round on his neglected home, and hungry family, and thought of all the fine dreams of his boyhood and how, for some reason, he had failed in everything, then in despair he cries out 'Oh, God, be merciful to a poor miserable dog, and worm of the dust' and all that,—why, don't you see? Although he is really praying from the heart it can't do him much real good, because calling himself dirty names, doesn't make him *expect* anything better. At best he is only asking for mercy, and so that is all he gets."

Elijah said quite a lot about the word faith not

being much use now-a-days because it was made to mean believing in ghost stories, or something which wasn't reasonable — but that the real meaning of faith was expecting good things. It is just as easy to expect good things as bad things; and a lot easier if we once get the idea that this world is *all* God's world, and that God has only one great purpose, and that One Purpose runs through *everything*.

Of course it was hard to reconcile some things with the goodness of God; but Phil Shackford was no harder to understand than Deacon Withers, and both were no harder to reconcile than bunions; — but a lot more interesting.

He said the Deacon was getting just the kind of experience he needed, no doubt, and so was Phil Shackford. Some lessons come mighty hard, and we ought to be thankful we didn't have to go through either of their experiences, but could go right on with our own, after learning from them what to shun.

"Then you don't believe much in prayer?" one of the bystanders asked Lige, for quite a number who had come down for their mail had stopped in

front of the store to listen to Lige's sermon.

"Sure I do," responded Lige. "Greatest thing in the world. Pray without ceasing, lest ye enter into temptation."

Some of the men laughed right out at this, and began to banter Lige. "When you going to start prayers, Deacon Lige?" one of them shouted. "Maybe we might like to join you."

Lige grinned a little at this, and finally answered with a funny drawl, for he knew they were stringing him. "Wall, there's nothing like keeping well prayed up in advance, but if you are really a serious inquirer, Jase Perkins, come up to the house Sunday evening and I'll give you your first lessons."

At this everybody laughed, and the party broke up, but Nate and I watched Lige, and saw him stroll down opposite the blacksmith shop and out onto the little point where the Dishmill brook flows into the millpond. There is a deep hole there, where we go in swimming, and sometimes, nights, Lige sits out there and catches bullpouts for his breakfast.

It was a fine moonlight night and after we'd

wandered about the village a while, and there was not much going on because it was prayermeeting night, Nate spoke up and said, "Let's go and find Lige and ask him some more questions?"

So we went out on the point and sure enough there he was, sitting in the moonlight, watching his bob which he had thrown out on the pond with a hand line. He had built a little smouldering fire on the edge of the water to keep off the mosquitoes, and to attract the fish as well, and as we stole out of the bushes, quiet like, and came suddenly on his quaint figure, with the curling smoke, and the redish cinders, and the moonlight on the pond, and the mist which lay over it, through which we could imagine all sorts of spooky things against the dark bank opposite, well, we just couldn't say a word for a minute, but stood quietly wondering who should break the silence. Lige broke it, for without looking up or showing any sign that he knew we were there at all he nearly startled us out of our wits by saying in the most natural sort of voice,

"Let us pray."

We waited breathlessly, expecting he would

start praying like we often heard the deacon down in his barn, and wondering if he would shout so loud that the villagers would all hear, and know he was at his devotions, but he never made a sound, and never moved his lips, and then after what seemed an awful long time he burst into laughter, as if he had heard the funniest kind of a joke. Well he laughed and laughed, all by himself, and I don't know when he would have stopped, but just then his bob went down out of sight and he jumped up and pulled in a walloping big bull-pout.

We thought this was a good time to introduce ourselves so we ran up, and Nate blurted out, "Did you get what you were praying for?"

"I always do, and so does everybody" Lige answered as he baited his hook and threw it back in the pond. "Sit down boys and lets have a season of prayer."

"Can you catch fish better when you pray?" Nate asked after we had got seated on the bank.

"Sure, any thing," Lige answered without taking his eyes off the bob. "You fellows just follow me round as you are doing for a while and per-

haps you'll learn to catch something bigger than bull-pouts."

"What, suckers?" Nate blurted out.

"Most men are suckers sometime during their existence, and that's nothing to be ashamed of either," he laughed.

He sat still quite a while after this, and neither of us spoke. We kept wondering I suppose whether he was sort of joking, or whether he was serious, and perhaps a little annoyed that we had disturbed him in his fishing and his devotions. But Nate had seen him pull out that big walloper of a bull-pout and he wasn't going to let his chance slip, to find out how it was done, so finally he got up courage to ask him again, how it was done, and if praying had anything to do with it.

Lige sat thoughtful a minute and then seemed to forget all about the fishing. He leaned over and looked at us with those wonderful searching eyes of his'n, so full of a sort of sadness and twinkling all the time, as if he wanted to laugh but was holding it back for some very great and noble reason, and wondering all the time if we could possibly understand.

"You remember what I told Jase Perkins about coming up to the house Sunday night? Do you think he'll come?"

"I guess not," we answered, "he's too much afraid of old Aunt Sarah Woods' ghost."

"Well, I guess that's right," answered Lige, "but what is more, I don't think he wants to learn anything enough to make any sacrefice. If he did, he'd get over his fear all right. Jase gets about all he ever prays for, and that is an easy going, lazy, good for nothing life. His fear of ghosts gives him about all the thrills he needs to break up the monotony of his lazy life. He likes it, of course, or he wouldn't hang on to it, same as a bull-pout likes worms or a hog likes buttermilk. What's that saying about 'casting pearls before swine?' If he comes, though, I shall know he really wants something more, and I'll give him the best that's in me."

"But you fellows are different. 'Seek and you shall find.' You found me tonight the same as you did last Sunday, and the other times, because you know I've got something that you want, even though it's only the secret of catching bull-pouts."

And he laughed good naturedly — and made us feel at ease and perfectly friendly all around.

Then he went on. "No," he said "that *particular* bull-pout was an accident, but the fact that I'm a good fisherman is no accident. That came as the result of fervent prayer. Not the kind you hear in the pulpit, or down by Deacon Withers barn, but real prayer, the only kind that counts."

"Could you teach us to pray — like that?" we asked.

"We all pray — like that," he answered.

"And can one get anything he wants if he prays right?" we asked.

"Well," Lige answered, "you can't get huckleberries off a gooseberry bush, or cabbages from turnips."

Of course we all laughed at this, it was so ridiculous.

"Well," Lige went on, "it does sound ridiculous doesn't it? But its no more idiotic than some of the things people pray for. Imagine Deacon Withers floating about with a white robe and a harp, and feather wings, singing from morning till night and actually scattering beams of sun-

shine and joy. Of course he says prayers for something of the sort, but that is not really what Deacon Withers wants, right here and now, and he doesn't want it anyhow, till he has to have it. You remember when he had a stoppage of the bowels and Dr. Rush said nothing would save him from heaven but a miracle. Did he trust the Lord to take him home? I guess not. He sent for the best doctor in a hundred miles. And when he got better, how he writhed over the fact that it had cost him such a lot of money. He said Dr. Fairbrother was a robber for charging him twenty-five dollars, when he had spent the best part of three days coming and going all the way from Manchester, N. H."

"No, Deacon Withers gets what he really prays for in his heart, not what he prays about when he stands up in church, for the one thing Deacon Withers wants is to be affluant and fore handed, and a model church member according to the standards he has been brought up to."

"Don't you think God hears his prayers," I asked, "when he prays so loud we can hear him clear across the street?"

"God has no time to listen to prayers that don't mean anything," Lige answered, "and he has so arranged things in this world that every real prayer counts, and counts and counts. It is a matter of law and nobody can change it. Yes, even an *evil* prayer counts, and every thought, whether it be good or evil leaves some mark which will always be a part of you wherever you go.

"Mind, I don't blame the deacon either. He is a good man because he lives consistent with his standards of what constitutes a righteous man, and a Christian. He was taught by others who had the same ideas, and, worse yet, he was taught that the wickedest thing in the world was to depart from what he was taught. You see there is no hope that he will ever be any different because he has followed and worshiped one set of pictures in his mind so long, that it would be hard to convince him that there were any others worth while."

"Not even if we prayed for him," I suggested.

"Well now, that's an idea, suppose we try," Lige said, and he sat thoughtful a minute. "I wonder if it would be like expecting figs from

thistles. Come on up to the house Sunday night and I'll tell you how," he added as he pulled in his line. "I guess I won't pray for any more fish tonight when that one is more than enough for my breakfast."

"Church was just letting out, as we went up through the village. We passed the deacon, who looked at the bull pout and scowled. "Better ha' been in church young men," he said, as he stamped along, hitting his cane hard on the walk as he went.

I wonder what he would have said if he had known that we were going to hold a special meeting to pray for him.

VII

Well, we went to Lige's house Sunday night and it was some time, I can tell you; but before that, we had met him in the afternoon up on the hillside near the camp and he had told us all about how to pray for Deacon Withers. We are going to try it out on him and Gee! Its as good as a regular stunt! If it will work on him I guess one can get about anything he wants out of this world, that is, anything worth while if it is reasonable.

That is just what Lige said. Its got to be reasonable, and worth while, or its no go. But when you come to think of it, isn't that about all anybody really wants anyhow?

He said if the thing we wanted wasn't reasonable we couldn't *really* have faith in it, no matter what we pretended to profess about religion; and if it wasn't worth while we would never be persistent enough to get it anyhow.

So, first off, we have to think of something we want real bad and make sure it is reasonable. Then we must go inside our secret chamber; —

that is what Lige calls the most inside part of one's mind — and keep picturing it all out just the way everything would be if we *really* had the thing we were wishing for.

Lige said praying wasn't much different from wishing if you wished hard enough and long enough. But if you wished hard enough and long enough, you'd be praying for the thing, in spite of yourself, and it didn't make any difference what church you belonged to. If you do it right, it works and if you don't, it won't.

Well then, if you picture it all out before you go to sleep at night, you dream about it and that makes it a little more real. And when you wake up you say to yourself, "Today is the day that will bring me nearer to the goal." Then, you get up and before you know it, you'll be acting just as if you really had it.

That was real faith. Getting to expect a thing so much that half the time you'll imagine its yours already. And of course it *is* true, in a sense, because if you can make it seem real enough inside your secret chamber, it belongs to

you anyway, and you can begin to enjoy it, and nobody can take it from you.

Lige says, the things inside are just as real, in their way, as the things outside are real in their way. And perhaps he's right.

So Lige said we must not think of Deacon Withers as cross or harsh or hard fisted any more, because even our *thoughts* would make him seem more so than he really was, and our actions would affect him sooner or later; but we must try to picture him in our minds as a nice, kind hearted, generous, smiling old gentleman who had, deep down in him, all the good qualities anybody has. He said it was all there — there in the seed — and we only had to believe it enough and our words and actions would draw it out of him, just naturally, like the sun makes the plants grow.

It made us laugh at first when he told us how we were to think of the deacon as a nice, kind hearted old gentleman. Then, it seemed like such a hard thing to do, we thought Lige must be fooling. But Lige said it was the easiest thing in the world when once you got started, and lots of fun besides. It was like planting seeds and giving

them water and sunshine and then watching them grow.

Of course it wasn't *us* who made them grow. We could only plant and tend and then wait for the harvest but the harvest was sure, if the plants got the right care. Anyhow, there could be no harm in planting good seeds, so why not try what we could do? Of course we musn't expect miracles — That would be like figs from thistles.

And we mustn't expect too much all at once. What we must do is to prove the law, little by little, and step by step, and the game will get more and more interesting all the time. If we learn to use faith in little things pretty soon we will be using it in big things and that is the way to become master over all things.

Then, when we asked him, if he thought we could become Kings and great rulers over millions of people, he laughed, and said, that to be a great ruler over other people was not half as big a thing as to be a ruler over the kingdom within each one of us. No matter how great a man appeared to be in the eyes of the world, if he

hadn't learned the little trick of conquering the great kingdom within, he was a failure.

We must get the idea that, deep down in the secret chamber, we are near the source of all things.

"What about praying to God?" Nate asked, because Lige hadn't said a word about God and we wondered if that was what he was driving at.

"That is just what we've been talking about" Lige answered and he sat still a long time thinking and looking far off. Finally he turned his big eyes to us and asked just as simply as anything, "Have you ever seen God?"

I guess we didn't know just what to answer — we were so surprised, but he said it just as if it was the simplest thing in the world, and he seemed to be waiting for an answer.

My mind was running over all the pictures I had seen in the family bible, and one on a stained glass window of a church I went to once. I wasn't sure though whether it was God the father, or God the son.

Nate was the first to speak. He remembered a golden text he had learned in Sunday School

about the pure in heart seeing God, and he repeated it kind of bashful like, and then added, "But, if thats the case, I guess mighty few of us will get a chance to see him."

"When?" Lige asked, kind of droll.

"After we're dead of course, but if we don't join the church, we won't get to see him, even then, according to Mr. Hardiman." Nate said this kind of solemn, for of course that was what he had been taught.

"And if you happen to live to be a very, very old man, it will be such a long, long wait even at that," Lige drawled out in his funny way and his eyes twinkled like he really thought it was a joke that Nate would have to wait so long before seeing God.

Well sir, we all laughed right out and it seemed so funny to have laughed just then, that we laughed some more. I suppose if some one should laugh right out in a funeral it would seem funny, and maybe it would make the others laugh in spite of the solemn occasion — and really, thats how we felt. We didn't know why we laughed but we did, and Lige laughed too.

I can't imagine Mr. Hardiman laughing out like that and I'll bet he would have talked to us pretty severe, but Lige was different. He seemed to understand. Lige thinks that we don't have to be dead to see God.

Well, he didn't say much more just then, but I guess he knew we would be thinking about what he had told us that afternoon down by the brook, the Sunday after Charlie Whiting fell in the Mill-pond, — how we should see something of God every day.

And now he had told us about how to get answers to our prayers by going into the "secret chamber." Maybe, too, he thought how we could learn to picture God in our minds the same way we were going to picture the Deacon, but he didn't say so — he just left us thinking, and wandered off by himself into the woods.

VIII

We had been up in the edge of the woods not far from the camp, overlooking Lige's house, and the way we got to go was that Nate's folks had gone over to Barnet to a funeral and I was allowed to go home with Nate after Sunday School and stay with him all night. Nate's sister went to walk with her beau, so we hooked a few cookies and things, and went up on the hill where, before long, we met Lige.

Lige was always wandering round Sundays. Mr. Hardiman asked Lige once why he didn't come to church and hear him preach, and Lige sort of turned it off by saying that he had to go into the wilderness, once a week, to be tempted of the devil; but I guess what he meant was just the opposite.

Lige told us, that it always made him feel like committing some crime to hear Mr. Hardiman preach, he talked so much about the devil and so little about the really good things of life. He told us that he had to get up into the hills in order to keep his faith strong in the one purpose. After

working in the blacksmith shop all the week and listening to all the small and mean talk, it just braced him up wonderful to get away on the mountain.

But the folks in the village can't understand it at all. They think Lige must be up to some mischief. Two men tried to follow him once and I guess they got all they bargained for, and more, for they say Lige took them way over Burdon Mountain and down over the ledges, then through a swamp and finally, after leading them way up near the jumping off place on Granville Mountain, without stopping, he turned and led them back the way they came. The men couldn't go to work the next day they were so lame, but Lige was just as fresh as ever.

As I say, the folks can't understand any hard-working man doing that sort of thing for pleasure, and so they are suspicious of Lige. Most of the men in the village lie round Sundays and rest or go to church, but anyhow, they don't do any more than they have to, and some of them that don't go to church play cards or get drunk.

Of course we boys like to wander off in the

woods and over the hills whenever we get a chance and so we often meet Lige. Sometimes two or three bunches of fellows get together, some from down at the Ville and some from over at the Corners. Lately I guess they've got to coming over on our hill hoping to meet Lige, same as we do. Sometimes we've had as many as twenty maybe — all sitting around and listening to Lige telling about his travels, and everything, and sometimes Lige does tricks for them, even if it is Sunday.

The boys go home and talk more about the tricks, I guess, than anything else and so the folks don't realize how much good Lige is doing by teaching them all the other things about life. Anyhow there's been quite a lot of talk against Lige lately because he has so many boys following him about the way he does. They say he is corrupting the minds of the youth, but we know better.

Well, as I said before, Lige walked away into the woods leaving us thinking. We sat there quite a while, talking over what he had said, then we

thought we would go through the woods to the camp and eat our lunch.

The camp is on the back side of the woods looking toward the mountain, and the trail up the mountain, which starts back of Lige's house, passes pretty near the hut we boys have built for a camp, out of fir boughs and birch bark and things. The hut is built into a ledge and is sort of hidden among the trees. There is a natural fire place in the ledge so we can build a fire without danger — and the smoke makes off through a crack in the rocks.

The front of the camp is left open so we can get a wonderful view of the mountain through the bushes, without being seen by folks who come along the trail.

We have some secret hiding places in the rocks where we store away provisions, so we'll always be provided for if we get caught in the rain or something.

We come up here in vacation time, and Saturdays, and have great times, playing we are wild indians, and fighters, and outlaws, like Jesse James, and Sitting Bull, and General Custer.

Just outside the bushes, below the camp, there is a fine spring with a little clearing about it which makes a dandy place for a picnic when we don't care to eat in the hut.

We had just brought our provisions down near the spring and were laying them out on a little birch bark table we had made, when who should appear but Lige, out of the woods. So he had not forgotten us. He came and sat down just as natural as if he had been invited and began to unroll from his handkerchief his own lunch and place it along with ours.

"What do you say, boys, if we take a good climb after dinner?" he suggested, as he looked away toward the mountain.

"That would be great," we agreed.

I had never climbed the mountain on Sunday and I couldn't help thinking what would happen if I should fall and break my leg or something — because everybody would say it was a judgment of God for breaking the Sabbath. Of course Lige would say that we were on God's holy place — even on the mountain, same as when Moses saw the burning bush, and God told him he

was standing, wherever he was, on holy ground.

Well, we didn't worry much, because it was such a wonderful warm and still afternoon, with the sun shining against the side of the mountain and lighting up the autumn foliage, and the gray rocks; and everything covered with a soft bluish haze — all looked so inviting, — and if one wanted to think so, it might have been something like heaven it was so beautiful. So we really couldn't see any harm in it, even if others might object.

Well, we were sitting there drinking in the beauty, and we had just taken a drink at the spring when we heard somebody calling "Lige."

Our first thought was to keep quiet but Lige stood up and was about to answer the call. Then he stopped a minute as if to apologize, — "Some friends of mine from over at the Corners," he said. "Don't mind, — there's enough for all."

Then he shouted back and pretty soon out came quite a pack—eight or nine boys and young men that we only knew a little bit — over from the Corners.

Lige said, "Sit right down and have lunch with us. Lucky we brought a good supply."

I guess we thought Lige was crazy. We only had a few sugar cookies and five sailor biscuit, besides a couple of smoked herring, and Lige had a small loaf of brown bread and some cheese. But Lige put his hands in his coat pockets and what do you think? he brought out two raw carrots and a raw turnip and began to cut them up into pieces with his jackknife.

"Plenty of food — enough for a regiment" he laughed, "if you only know how to make good use of it. I'll tell you how" he said. "First, every one get a good drink of water at the spring and then gather round the festal board."

Well, sir, you would have thought it was a royal feast if you could have heard Lige talk.

He began by telling us that a most wonderful miracle was about to take place. Then he gave everyone a piece of raw carrot and told him to hold it in his hand till he said the word. We all sat around laughing and feeling foolish I guess holding that piece of carrot and wondering what he was going to do. We thought of course it was some trick.

Then he told us to look at that piece of carrot

very carefully because a most wonderful magical change was about to take place, and that piece of carrot was about to turn into human flesh and blood. Well, we looked at it, but it staid just plain carrot till he told us to place it in our mouths and begin to chew. Then he told us to chew and chew and chew as long as we could keep it up. If any went down our throats it must be so natural and easy like, that we would hardly know it. He said the more we chewed the better the miracle could take place because the carrot had to be mixed with a lot of other things in the mouth and stomach before the change into flesh and blood could take place.

Well it gradually dawned on us what he meant, and then we went on laughing and talking and chewing and I guess we forgot all about not being enough for all.

Lige kept on telling us about the miracle, and how the food was not only changed into flesh and blood but into spirit and life. Then he would ask us to think, before we took a mouthful, and decide what we wanted it to turn into, whether bad thoughts or good thoughts.

Then he said a lot about chewing our food, how it was necessary, if one wanted to keep his teeth and other organs in good condition, to use them just the same as one would use his muscle if he wanted to keep strong. So carrots and other raw food were good for us, partly because it made us chew more. Then he showed us his wonderful muscles and told us how he kept them strong by working at the forge and by tramping in the hills and everything.

But he said there was something more, which was just as important and that was, to keep happy. One couldn't keep strong if he was unhappy, or have a good digestion either. So we had to find some way to keep happy, if we wanted to be well and strong. Of course one might be made unhappy by eating too much — and on the other hand people sometimes gorged themselves on food and drink because of unhappiness, hoping it would relieve them. A good appetite didn't always mean good digestion because, if it made us overload our stomachs with badly chewed food, we were just inviting trouble.

It wasn't half so hard to be happy, if one had

just the right amount of the right kind of food, and ate it in the right way, but of course that wasn't all there was to say about happiness. He said we shouldn't depend on luck and chance for our happiness, but should go out and work for it just as we work for food, because it is necessary for our health.

Well he said a lot more things which I haven't time to set down now or I would never get to the other things I started out to tell about, but he said that we get back from the world, just what we give out to it. If we give out good thoughts, good thoughts will come back to us, because thoughts are like seeds and if planted in fertile soil will give back sometimes a hundred fold.

And evil thoughts are like seeds too, and bring back a crop of weeds and thorns. Then one of the boys asked Lige "Where do you get the seeds in the first place?" And Lige sat thoughtful a long time before he answered. Finally he said kind of solemn and dreamlike, almost as if talking to himself — "There is only one source. Only one. Only one."

The boys sat kind of hushed, when Lige spoke

those words till he finally brightened up and said suddenly — for the food was all gone, "Now our hunger is satisfied, let's take a tramp over the mountain and prove what our food can do for us. I'll bet you'll all agree you never felt better after a hearty meal." Then he added kind of impressive,

"Remember and do these things after I'm gone. Remember your friend Lige, and this meal we've had, for perhaps we shall never all be together again. Remember the miracle — and that it is in your power to change the food you eat into just those things you desire, not only into flesh and blood but into happiness and joy and faith in the one source of all things." That was what he said as near as I can remember and it made us feel kind of sad, thinking that perhaps he might be going away where we should see him no more.

But we said nothing, and pretty soon he rose, and stretched himself in the sun, and led off up the mountain, while we followed him like sheep along the trail.

IX

We went up on the mountain just as easy as anything and everyone said they never felt stronger or more like climbing. Some of the boys must have thought that the miracle was in feeding so many people on such a small amount of food,— anyhow, they have been telling it, that way, over at the Corners, for the story has already got round that there were more than a hundred in the party. It's funny how fast a story like that grows, — as Lige says — like seed planted on fertile soil.

I guess the folks are beginning to think Lige uses magic or hypnotism or something on us boys, but that is because they are too ready to believe all the bad stories they hear and don't half try to find out the truth.

We had a wonderful view from the top. The country was spread out like a map as far as the eye could reach, and the farms and villages looked so tiny and the people so much like insects crawling about, it was hard to realize how important

they really were, or how serious were all their troubles and fears.

It's true what Lige says — there is nothing like getting up in the mountain to relieve one's mind of worry. We could almost imagine that the kingdoms of the earth were spread out beneath our feet and we were the rulers of them all.

Then, we lay on the ground a long time watching the clouds floating over our heads till the sun began to get low and we began to think of home.

Lige took us down by another trail through a wonderful dark, lonesome ravine on the north side of the mountain where there are big boulders and rotten trunks of trees everywhere, all damp and mossy, and showed us a deep cave he had discovered which he called the devil's den. It ran way back in the rocks and was so dark we couldn't see how far in it went.

We had great fun stumping one another to go in and pull out the devil by the horns. Some of the boys lighted matches and after a while we began to get bold enough to go in quite a ways. Then something happened which sent us scampering back as if the old nick was after us.

At first it sounded like some animal inside rattling around, then we heard heavy foot falls. After listening a while we went back and got a long pole and poked it as far as we could reach.

Suddenly there came out the most blood curdling roar you ever heard — followed by a lot of other sounds like cat calls and dogs barking and everything.

Well, you can better bet, we tumbled over one another to get out, and away to a safe hiding place. We expected bears and wildcats and every kind of animal to come piling out of that dark hole, chasing us. We scattered in all directions, behind rocks and trees and things, and it was quite a while before we had courage to come back into the open. Then we discovered Lige was not with us.

Nothing seemed to be coming out of the cave so we worked up a little nearer but keeping at a safe distance.

Then we called "Lige," and what do you think? Lige's voice answered back, right out of the mouth of that cave. We couldn't believe our ears, but it was laughing and said "Come on in boys,

there is nothing here to be afraid of. I'm the only devil there is, and I didn't mean to scare you so badly — honest I didn't. I thought you'd know my voice. Come on in, I'm perfectly safe."

Well, it took a good deal of coaxing to get any of us started. We shouted for Lige to come on out, but he said he couldn't get out. We'd have to come in after him. Well — after a time one of the older boys from the Corners started in, lighting matches as he went. Pretty soon he began to laugh and called us to follow.

Well sir, what do you think? When we got in quite a little way, we looked up, and there was a hole about a foot square, with clear sky showing, and Lige was up there looking down. And Lige hadn't been in the cave at all, but had slipped round overhead, behind some rocks, and had been dropping things down into the cave and shouting through the hole.

We had a good laugh at one another and thought what a good story it would make to tell around the village, but Lige said it was like all other devil stories, there was no devil in them, once you got at the real truth. Truth and error

were like light and darkness. One didn't have to chase darkness out in order to make room for light. All one had to do was to let his light shine and darkness and error would just simply melt away into nothingness.

"Then why did you call that cave the devil's den, if you don't believe there is a devil?" one of the young men asked.

"That's just the reason," Lige laughed back, "because there weren't any devils in it except us. We let in the light and the darkness disappeared. Then, when we got together and understood everything, the devils disappeared too."

So Lige had a chance to teach his little lesson after all, and we wondered if he had planned it that way right along, or whether it just happened. Anyhow, it gave us quite an exciting adventure and something to talk about.

The Burdon Corner boys left us near the camp because they had a long way to go and it was most dark by the time we reached Lige's house.

X

Lige took us in by the back way to the kitchen and Nate and I brought wood from the yard, while Lige built a fire and started coffee. Then he took some yellow corn meal and poured boiling water over it and fried us the most delicious pancakes we ever ate.

Lige didn't give us any more lessons but let us eat our fill,—with plenty of maple syrup too — and laughed to see what wonderful appetites we had. When we could hold no more, he told us he had a lot of things he wanted to show us and invited us to go into the parlor.

There was a sort of living room off the kitchen where Lige slept and where he usually entertained his company, when he had any, and this room was not much different from such rooms in any farmer's house, but we had never seen the inside of the parlor. This was always closed and there were dark green shades on all the windows — so nobody, I guess, had ever had a chance to look into the room, either from the inside or the outside. We felt a little skittish about going into

this room, because it was the room where old Aunt Sarah Woods had been found dead.

Lige led the way and lighted up the parlor lamp, so it didn't seem quite so spooky, and we followed sort of holding our breaths, and pretty curious to know what was in there anyhow, but we were not prepared for the surprise we got.

Gee! if the devil's den was scary I don't know what to say about this place. Lige was pretty careful though, and kept explaining, or I guess we would have been scared into fits.

Well, he had the place all set out with every kind of horrible image you can imagine, such as we had never seen nor heard of before, and on the wall over the mantle was a yellow streamer with a picture of a big black dragon on it, and all about the room were smaller ones, besides a lot of flags of different nations.

Lige told us how he had picked these things up in different parts of the world, and that most of the images were idols or gods that people worshiped. We thought most of them looked more like devils than gods and told Lige so.

"That's the funny thing about it," Lige an-

swered, "if you go back far enough gods and devils look pretty much alike. See this strange creature," he said as he picked up something that looked, for all the world, like a scare crow. "This represents the image of God in the mind of the poor native of the South Sea Islands. Where did he get it? Is it any wonder his religion is one of fear?"

Then he showed us a big bronze god, sitting cross legged — a kind of fat faced, sleepy looking fellow with his eyes half closed and his hands hanging down in his lap. He said that was a Budda from India and it really meant a good deal, for Budda was a great teacher who taught us how to be calm and resigned inside, no matter what happened outside. We guessed that was where he got the teaching from about the inner chamber that he was telling us about in the afternoon. But after they made a god of him the people just worshiped his image, instead of trying to understand his message, and that was like a good many other religions, Lige guessed.

Lige said, Budda was represented as overcoming all the temptations of the world, but Nate and

I thought that wouldn't do much good if he just sat still, kind of sleepy like, and didn't get up and hustle round to make things better. He might get to feeling all right inside by sitting quiet with his eyes closed, but it would be a good deal like an ostrich who buries her head in the sand to get away from danger.

Lige showed us a lot of other things and told us more about the gods — more than I can ever set down — and it was all mixed in with little lessons about life, that made us think. That was Lige's way, and I guess Lige would have been a great teacher if he had had a fair chance. As near as we can make out Lige didn't have any folks, and ran away to sea when he was quite young — because they abused him in the home where he was — so he didn't have any education except what he picked up on his travels.

But he said we all had images of God that we carried about with us and they were just as real as these that were made of wood and stone and things.

"And some of them are just as queer, I'll bet," Nate exclaimed.

That set us to thinking over again what Lige had told us in the afternoon about making the right kind of pictures in our inner chambers.

Lige said, he guessed it was fear that made such frightful images come in people's minds. They couldn't believe in the one Good so they had to invent some explanation of why we have evil thoughts and deeds, and these images were the result. He thought that most folks took the good as a matter of course and didn't think much about it because *good* didn't *need* explaining. They forgot how much good there really was in the world because they spent so much time trying to explain *evil*.

"I don't see how you get around it either," Nate said, "if God is all good."

"Well," Lige answered, "it is hard, but remember the lesson of the devil's den — and remember that every thought we hold tends to become real on some plane of life. When people understand that there will be no more wars."

"Then how about prophesy?" we asked, because Mr. Hardiman had been preaching about it and had told us that all the wars that were ever

foretold by the prophets would have to come true to prove the word of God.

"There are different ways of proving God's word," Lige mused. "If we understand his laws we won't worry so much about what somebody says he said."

He had been taking things out from an old trunk. Finally he picked up an object which he began carefully to unroll from a beautiful silk handkerchief. It proved to be a sort of glass globe which he held up and polished off till it reflected the light something wonderful like a soap bubble glistening in the sun.

"This is what they tell fortunes with in India," he said. "The fakers gaze into this crystal globe and pretend to read the future."

"Can they really do it?" I asked. "Can they really tell what is going to happen before hand?"

"They can tell you lots of things that *will* come true if you choose to *believe* what they tell you," Lige answered, "but that's just like prophesy."

"And fortune tellers who prophesied evil in the old days were called Sorcerers weren't they?" Nate asked.

"Yes, and they were killed for it. Perhaps people understood more about the law in those days," Lige answered, kind of grim and solemn.

Just then we heard footsteps outside and Lige took us quickly out into the living room and closed the parlor. Then he left us and went to the kitchen where we heard someone fumbling at the back door. We heard him say "Who is it?" and it was Phil Shackford's voice that answered back — wild and excited:

"For God's sake, Lige, do something for me or they'll get me sure! Give me a drink, or something, quick. Honest to God I haven't had a drink — since the last time — last time I was here."

So Phil had been coming to Lige for his liquor. That was the first thing we thought, and it looked pretty bad for Lige. We couldn't help thinking of some of the suspicions that had been going round the village, about why Lige went away so much into the mountains. He must have some place where he got liquor and sold it secretly to the men.

Then we thought about what happened over at

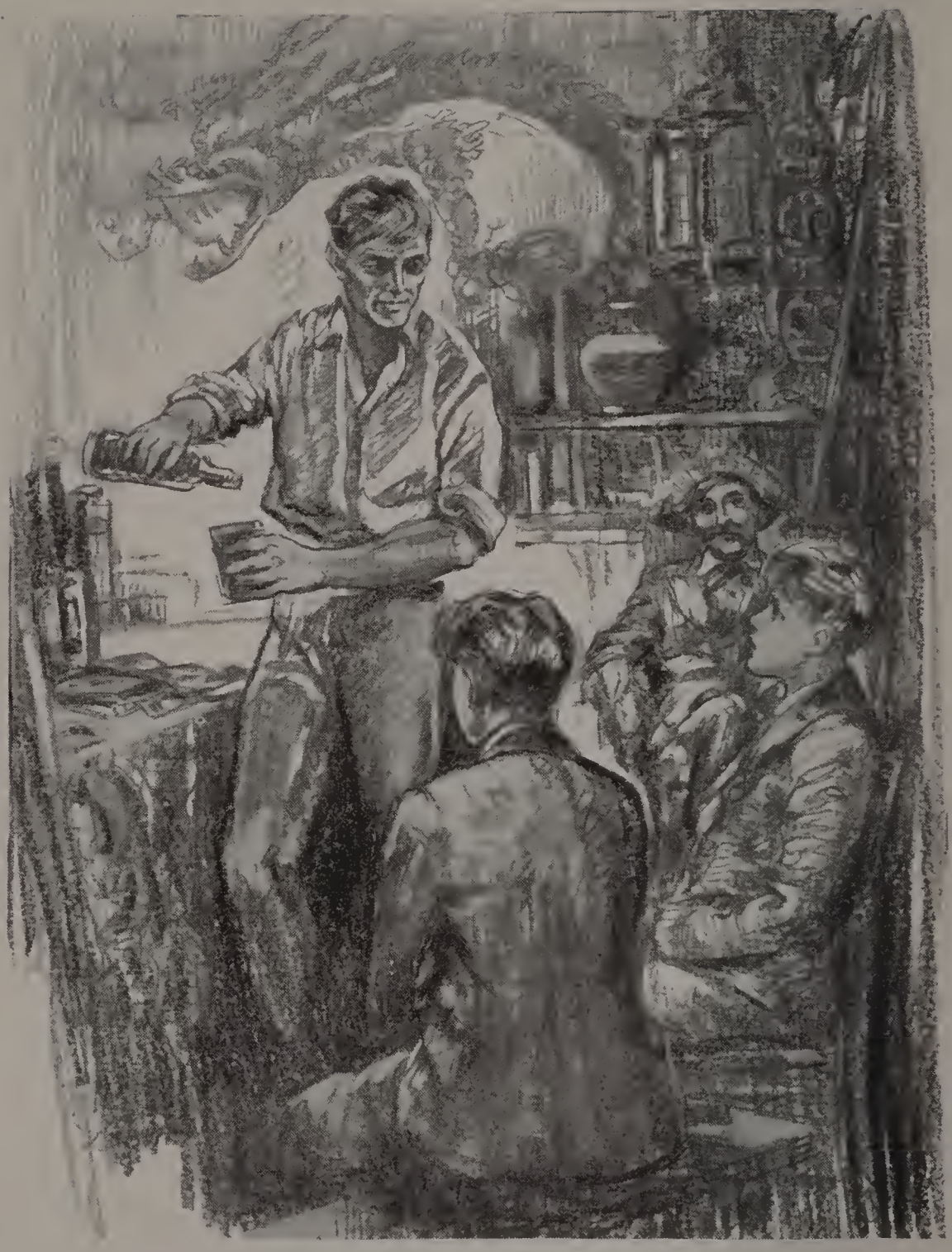
Jack Bowker's wedding when they said he made wine out of water and that they all got full on it. Of course he couldn't make wine from water—that was just a bluff. Lige must be supplying them from some secret place in the mountain where it was either made or smuggled in.

And Phil was being chased perhaps by officers of the law, and maybe Phil was one of the gang, and they might be here after him any minute and we'd all be arrested together.

My! But it's funny how many things will run through one's head in an instant. I guess Nate had been thinking about the same things too, because he looked scared as anything and said "Let's beat it out the front way."

But just then Lige came in and walked over to us and his eyes were twinkling so, that somehow the fright all left us and he said almost in a whisper—"Phil Shackford has been keeping the pledge all the week. We must show him how to get clear of the devil. You remember how I told you to pray for the Deacon." Then he went back in the kitchen.

So that was why Phil came to Lige, and it was



"You always get what you wish for. What'll you have?"

the devils who were chasing him — or so he thought.

Well, we were prepared then, and when Lige brought Phil in, all kind of shaky, we stepped up to him smiling and held out our hands, like he was the president, and said "How do you do, Mr. Shackford? It's a fine evening out."

Well I never saw anything like the way it worked. There he was, all dressed up too in his meeting clothes and had had a shave and we had almost never seen him that way before, on Sunday. He sat down quite calm and we asked for his family, and if Mrs. Shackford was over her rheumatism, and if the new baby had cut any teeth, and he seemed pleased as anything.

Lige went out in the kitchen while we were talking and when he came in he brought some little cakes on a plate and he held a long dark bottle in his hand. Well that bottle kind of upset us again but Lige's laugh relieved us.

"It's a Hindo magic wishing bottle" he said. "You always get what you wish for. What'll you have? I suppose you'll take a little bitters" he said to Phil with a wink, "but I don't think

you boys would like it. How would you like coffee — or say, raspberry shrub?"

Of course we both wanted shrub, but just to make it interesting one of us said coffee. He set out the glasses and there right before our eyes he poured out of that bottle first shrub, then coffee and then Phil's bitters. Then he poured out a full glass of clear water for himself.

"There's magic for you!" Phil said, as we tasted our glasses. "That's better than the one Lige put over at Jack Bowker's wedding. You remember, Lige, when you turned water into wine? Show the boys that one."

Phil was feeling pretty good now and was really getting quite gentlemanly to us.

Well, Lige went out again and after a while brought in a pitcher and a lot of small glasses. First he filled up the glasses with water to show us there was nothing else in the pitcher. Then he poured it all back, and when he filled the glasses the second time it was all wine. Then he poured the wine back, and right out of the same pitcher, he poured first wine, then water, till all the glasses were filled. Finally he poured

out nothing but water which he put back in the pitcher and emptied in the sink.

"Didn't pass any of it round I notice," Phil chuckled.

"No, that would spoil the trick" Lige laughed back.

"But you did, over at the wedding didn't you?" Phil asked, and he turned and winked slyly at us. "The minister asked Jack Bowker about it and Jack said you made several sap buckets full, and then they all got drunk on it."

"And didn't Mr. Hardiman know Jack was stringing him?" Lige asked. This seemed to tickle Lige immensely and he laughed a long time.

Well, that put Lige into fine feather. He opened the parlor door and brought out one thing after another, and told stories about them, and made jokes, and did the most wonderful tricks you ever saw, and some of the best ones he showed us how to do, just to prove to us how natural they were, and how any one could do them just as well as he and better, if they only cared to study and practice.

Then he brought out some books on magic and showed us pictures and things to prove that magicians did the same tricks thousands of years ago. He said if folks only knew about those things there wouldn't be so many superstitions. It was the truth we needed — always the truth to set us free. And no matter how jolly Lige was, you could see all the time he was trying to impress serious lessons.

Then he brought out the crystal and told Phil's fortune. That made him sit up and take notice you can bet. But Nate and I were looking at one another and smiling because we knew the secret, and of course we wouldn't give it away for anything. We wanted to see if it would come true, and anyhow we knew Lige was working hard for Phil's good.

He gazed into the crystal as serious as anything and he said, he could see Phil, as a fine old man with silky white hair and beard sitting on the veranda of the old Squire Whiting place in a rocking chair and his wife was beside him looking so sweet and happy because one of the boys was coming home from college. Then he told

how he could see Mazie (who is the baby) teaching the village school, and Dick being a business man in New York and sending home a check every week.

Well, if you can believe it, Phil sat there listening to every word, and the tears were streaming down his face, and one could see how the charm was going to work just as Lige said it would.

Anyhow we haven't any doubt, after what we saw that night that a heap of good luck is coming to the Shackford family — and of course knowing all we do, it will make a lot of difference in the way we will act toward them.

Nate and I have been talking it over since and we know we will have to treat them as if it was true already, because we can't get that picture out of our minds about Phil and his wife sitting on the veranda.

After that, Lige did some tricks with cards, and I don't wonder some folks think the old nick is in them, but Lige showed us how they were done, and then explained how a pack of cards was, next to the Bible, one of the most wonderful

things in the world, if used in the right way. He said it was just as important to learn to play as to learn to work, and if we didn't learn to play fair, we never would amount to much.

Just then Lige stopped suddenly and stared out the window, then he ran to the door and called "Jase, Jase, come on in." Pretty soon he came back alone, and he said he saw two boys running off down the road and one of them he thought was Jase Perkins.

"Well, if they looked in here I guess they'll have something to tell," Phil said as he rose and looked about the room. It was a sight for the Gods, as they say, for gods and dragons were scattered about among the trick things and curios from all over the world. And to make matters worse there were the cards on the table and the black bottle and the glasses.

We had to laugh then, but we knew if it ever got around the village it would be no laughing matter and the more we tried to explain the worse it would be, so we agreed to say nothing and watch what happened.

Phil said he guessed he'd better be getting home

or the folks would worry. It seemed funny to hear Phil talk that way, but it showed how changed he was getting, already. Lige went out to the door with him.

We waited back a little because we wanted to ask Lige one or two more questions. When he came in we were looking at a little gold locket which hung by a tiny chain on his bed post.

"That is a very old keepsake" he said. "I've worn it all around the world."

"Is it your good luck charm?" I asked.

He didn't answer right away, but opened up the locket and there was a picture in it of the most lovely girl you ever saw. She was smiling and her teeth were like pearls. And she had wonderful blue eyes that looked right at you and made you feel somehow that she could read everything in your heart, down to the deepest secret, but then, all so jolly you wouldn't mind because you would feel somehow that she understood.

"Maybe it is someone he used to know when he was a boy" Nate suggested kind of bashful.

"I never saw her, but I love her face, don't you?" he said sentimental like. Then he added

kind of twinkling — "I call her Saint Mary of Erin's Isle."

"I guess she's your patron saint, isn't she?" Nate asked. Nate has a book of saints at home.

"Or my matron saint" Lige answered as he put the locket back on the bed post and began to clear up the litter.

"I shouldn't think you would have to work in a blacksmith shop," I suggested "when you could make heaps and heaps of money on the stage." And Nate added "We can't imagine why you'd settle in a sleepy little place like this after all the places you've been in."

Lige waited quite a long time before he spoke. "It was on account of a lost relative" he finally said, slowly. "I thought perhaps I might find him here."

Then he changed the subject, but it was such a strange answer he gave us, we would have liked to ask him a lot more questions.

XI

All the way home we kept wondering what Lige could mean about coming here to look for a lost relative. Did he mean that he had a son or a brother or something, who had run away, and if so, who could it possibly be? We were thinking over all the different boys and men in the village, but every one seemed to belong to some body that we knew, and Lige didn't seem to have any body belonging to him, or who was likely to — and for that matter, Lige didn't belong to anybody that we knew, in the town or out of it. The lady in the picture was the only one Lige seemed to be connected with and we didn't even know what she was to him.

Nate had been quiet, quite a spell, as we walked toward the village. Suddenly he spoke up and said:

"I have it."

"What?" I asked.

"His matron saint! That's his *mother* of course. Matron means mother, don't it? The

Matron of an orphan asylum is just a sort of step mother to all the children."

"Maybe he was raised in an orphan asylum" I said — "Maybe she was the matron of the asylum."

"But he never saw her — the lady in the picture — and he has worn the locket all around the world. What would that mean but a keepsake of his dead mother? She must be dead or he would be trying to find her — and he said the lost relative he was looking for was a *him*."

"Maybe he's looking for his father. Don't you remember his telling us down back of the blacksmith shop one time how he knew his mother was a daughter of joy — because he had seen her picture. Of course that *is* her picture!"

"But he said his father was one of the solemn kind. I wonder who it could be. You know he said he had never seen his father—"

"And had no picture of him except the one he carried 'inside himself.' What did that mean?" I asked.

"Why don't you see?" Nate answered. "That's easy. He was trying to explain why he had such

a solemn side to his nature when he knew his mother must be gay from her picture — and that was the picture — in the locket — which he wore all round the world since he ran away from the asylum."

"How do you know he ran away from an asylum?" I asked.

"I *don't know* I guess — but I'll bet he did. That would explain everything, and be just like Lige, and now he's looking round for his lost relative and who else could that be, but his father? It's the only one he had to lose, because he had already lost his mother, and if it was a brother or an uncle or anything like that I guess we would have heard about it by now — but a father — that's different. Maybe he didn't know whether he had a father or not — that is, a real one, but of course he had some kind of a father besides God, who is everybody's father in a way."

Well, that was the way we were going on, till first we knew we were down by Phil Shackford's place, and we stopped sudden when we heard voices. It was pretty dark, but we could make out two figures and we heard Phil's voice saying—

"No sir-ree! You needn't worry about those boys. I was there myself and nothing went on but the most innercent amusement. Drinkin' an' gamblin'! Ha-ha—That's a great joke. Just like the cowardly sneakin' whelp! Too scared to come in even for a drink—because of that dragon picture on the wall, I'll bet." And Phil laughed long and hearty.

"Well, it's lucky I met you first" we heard the other voice say, and then I recognized dad.

He seemed kind of put out and didn't know whether to scold us or not. He had started to come up after us when he met Phil — who told him his side of the story.

As we walked toward home he said that Jase Perkins had come along just as church was letting out and told what he saw through Lige's window — that it was a drunken and disorderly crowd, gambling and carrying on something dreadful.

Judging by Phil's condition, which was better than he had ever seen it before on Sunday night, dad said he'd have to make some allowances. But he thought we'd have to walk pretty straight for a while to prove to the villagers that every

thing was all right, after what Jase had set going, and he thought we'd better not go up to Lige's again on Sunday night.

Ma wasn't feeling very well, so she didn't go to church, and dad said he'd hurry home before anyone got her upset — if they hadn't already — and we'd better get along to Nate's house and go to bed. I guess dad knew everything was all right or he wouldn't have let me go on with Nate.

Nate's sister was on the poarch with her beau, so we sneaked in the back way and got into bed — but it was a long time before we got to sleep, there was so many things to talk over.

XII

It is nearly a week now since Lige Golden went away, and so many things have happened since I wrote anything in my diary I guess it will take me all winter to write it up; and it ought to be written because the more we think about it, Nate and I and some of the other boys, the more it seems like the most exciting story that was ever written.

The village is all upset, and some think one thing and some another, but Nate and I know, and we think Lige will come back, or will let us hear from him again somehow, where-ever he is.

But of course Jase Perkins and Bill Trainor and Joe Peneau all swear that they saw him or his ghost in the flames, and that either he was burned to death, or else, by some kind of black magic, he escaped.

Then there's that story of Deacon Withers', that Lige appeared to him in a dream; and what is more curious the deacon stands up for him now and won't allow anyone to say anything against him in his presence.

And the deacon is getting to be real nice to us

boys and smiles when he sees us, and we go right on smiling at the deacon and treating him just like Lige told us to do when he told us how to pray expecting the thing to really happen. Lige was right about praying anyhow and it looks as if our prayers for the deacon were being answered, just as he said they would.

We haven't heard a word from Mary Withers but if she isn't all right why does the deacon keep on smiling and looking so peaceful and happy and different from what we ever saw him before?

But I suppose I ought to go back and set down everything in the order in which it happened, the way it would be in a story and when I grow up perhaps I'll be able to get it all printed in a book.

Well, these are the facts as near as I can set them down.

Deacon Withers had been having quite a lot of trouble with his daughter Mary Madeline. Mary is about seventeen or eighteen and since her mother died has kept house for her father. Mary is a jolly girl, and likes to go to parties — and I guess she had been running pretty wild and had given the deacon a good deal of trouble. When

the deacon would go off to prayermeeting Mary would pretend to be sick or something so as to go to bed early, and then, after he had gone, she would slip on her best clothes and skip off down to the tavern where they were holding dancing parties.

Quite a lot of gay people came over from the Corners, and up from the Ville, and sometimes some city people would be there and Mary sort of got her head turned, as the deacon said, and he couldn't do anything with her.

I guess Mary was high strung the way they say her mother was in her early days. Anyhow she liked society and she didn't like prayer meeting where she usually got prayed for, whether she went, or whether she didn't.

I don't blame her much, for not liking to be prayed for; I don't like it very well myself, that is, the way *they* do it. I think Lige's way is the best, that is, if you want to get what you want; but if I had a grudge and wanted to get even with somebody and didn't mind being kind of mean and underhanded I would drop a note into the contribution box asking for special prayers for

that person, and I would write in his initials and I would describe him so everybody would guess who it was, knowing that Mr. Hardiman would read it right out, before the whole congregation; and perhaps the person himself would be sitting right there in sight of every body, with his face all red and his ears tingling and feeling like thirty cents.

Gee! I know that feeling, and I'll bet Mary Withers does. Besides, she has to hear the deacon pray every morning and every night and three times before meals not to mention Sundays and church nights. Well, I guess Mary got hardened in her heart, as the deacon said she was — last Friday night in the prayermeeting, where all the trouble started.

Nate and I went to church that night, because they had been having a revival all the week and Nate's girl, Mille Hoskins, was trying to get him interested. Nate was interested all right, but it was more so he could go home with her afterwards. He got me to go and sit with him but he made me promise not to tag after, when he started home with Millie.

We sat back near the door because we wanted to be handy to get out before the aftermeeting, when the members are asked to pass down the isles and ask sinners to come forward to the anxious seat.

The minister preached that night about a Mary Mageline, or Madeline. It was a kind of wisha washy sermon and it didn't interest us boys very much so we had been trying some of the tricks Lige taught us to do with a piece of string.

But after the sermon, and after they had sung the Ninety and Nine, and Almost Perswaded, Deacon Withers got up and began to talk about his own Mary Madeline. He said she was going to the bad like the other one did in the sermon,—if she hadnt already gone, and he wanted every body to pray real hard that God would soften her hard heart and break her stubborn will, so she could return to her father's house and ask forgiveness.

That was the first time we had heard that she had been away, but it appears that she had been gone since the day before, when the Deacon had words with her and told her she would have to

turn over a new leaf or not live under his roof.

You could see the deacon was pretty well broke up and didn't know what to do, and little by little it all came out what had happened. The deacon said he mourned for her as one who was dead, but what he really thought was, that she had gone home from the dance with some of the folks over at the Corners and was staying away, just to spite him. You could see that he was determined in his mind not to go after her, and that was why he had kept it to himself all day.

We made up our minds Mary was going to be just as stubborn as he, and we were wondering how it was going to come out, because we couldn't see how prayers were going to be any use when nobody seemed to be expecting anything nice to happen. But we thought we'd watch and see because we were interested in prayers, even if we wer'nt interested in religion, and we were interested in Mary.

Just then it was, that Moses Prouty sprung a sensation. He said he saw a girl, that looked for all the world, come to think of it, like Mary Withers talking with Lige Golden, Thursday

night, and they were standing in Lige's front yard in the moonlight when he was driving home from the Post Office. He said he looked back and saw them go into the house together and saw them lighting a candle. He didn't think of Mary at the time, but now he felt sure it must have been her.

Then Josh Bean got up and said Lige hadn't been in the blacksmith shop all day but that he just saw him drive up through the village before church time with Bill Straiters sorrel mare and top buggy. He thought he had been down to the Ville and maybe he had shipped Mary away on the railroad. It looked kind of funny because Lige never used the top buggy for himself, but always used the democrat wagon when he went down to the train to get supplies for Bill.

He said he hailed Lige and asked him if he was going courtin. Lige looked kind of sheepish and only said "No, — Bean," and he winked kind of sly when he said it.

Josh had been puzzled, most to death, ever since he came in, but now it looked clear as daylights to him that Lige had kept Mary all night

up at his house and then sent her off to, God knows where, and if this was so, he deserved to be lynched.

Gee! That set the whole congregation into the most excited state I ever saw and someone shouted "He's got a devil in him if any body ever had one" — and another said "Tar and feathers ain't none too good for him."

Mr. Hardiman was on his feet trying to keep order, for two or three were trying to speak all at once. He finally got a chance, and said he was for law and order, and while he didn't think enough had been said to *prove* anything against Mr. Golden, the fact that he had been seen with Mary Withers late last night, and that both had been away from the village all day, made it look pretty suspicious and something ought to be done about it. If the officers of the law wouldn't do anything the citizens should take matters into their own hands.

We knew that Mr. Hardiman hadn't much faith in the officers of the law for Bill Straiter was the sheriff and wouldn't be likely to go against Lige. Besides Bill was one of the rum

crowd and when there was a fight on in the village he was just as likely to be half full as any of the rest.

You could see the deacon was pretty well worked up, for when he tried to speak, his voice kept breaking down and his hand trembled like he had the palsy. He said he didn't think much of this Lige Golden. He was a queer character and cast strange spells over young folks. Nobody knew who he was, or who his folks were, and that was against him. Who knew but that he might be a jail-bird.

He said, Lige had often stopped at the gate, on his way back and forth from work, and Mary was always telling some of the strange things he had said and done.

Then he knew Mary had met him at the dancing parties, for though Lige didn't dance, he liked to sit around and talk while watching the others.

There was something the matter with Mary, that was clear, and somebody had got it to answer for. If it was Lige Golden no punishment could be too severe. He certainly believed horsewhipping would be too mild. He must be gotten

rid of — out of the town and the sooner the better.

There was a lot of whispering going on and you could see that some of the people who didn't say anything were more excited than those who did. The meeting finally broke up somehow, and instead of an after meeting to save sinners the folks got together in little groups and were discussing what was going to be done to Lige.

When we got out in the yard there were other groups and some of the folks who were not at church had joined in and were using pretty rough language, worse than anything we had heard in church. It was plain that there were some who thought Lige Golden was guilty of a pretty low down trick and that he had spirited off poor little Mary Withers to cover up his enequity. Anyhow they didn't propose to let him get away by waiting till morning and were going to get him that night.

Bill Trainor started off to find a rope and, from the talk, we weren't sure whether they were going to hang him or ride him out of town on a rail,

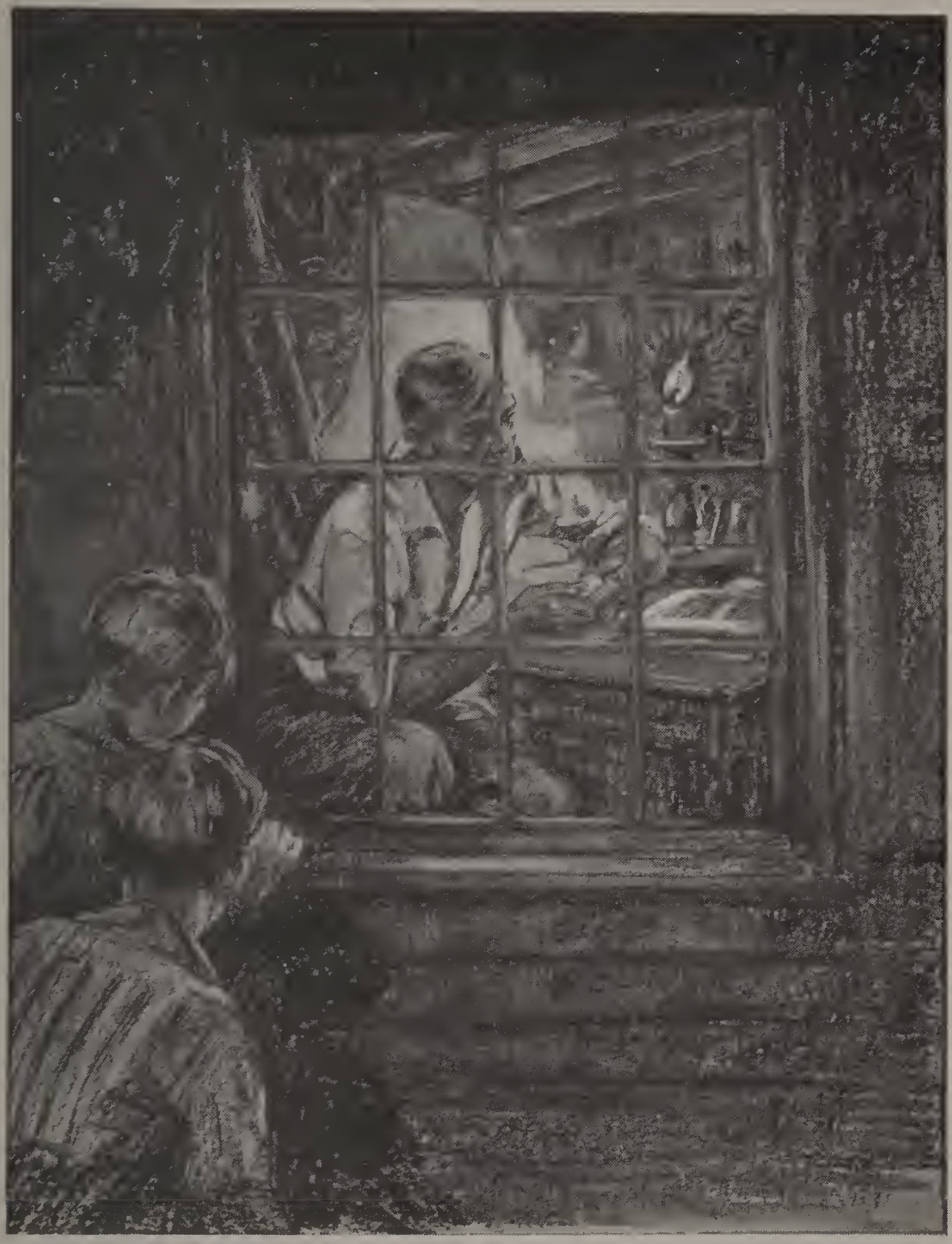
but Nate and I only had one thought in mind, and that was to let Lige know his danger.

We started off slowly at first, as if to go home, but as soon as we were out of sight we ran as fast as our legs would carry us.

There was a light in Lige's bedroom off the kitchen and we stopped a moment catching our breath as we glanced in at the window. There was something about what we saw, that I shall never forget. The candle flickered on the little lightstand by the window and near it sat Lige on the edge of his bed, gazing intently on something he held in his hands.

It was the little picture we had seen that other night, when we were there with Phil Shackford and he showed us all his treasures.

The candle light gave him a weird look, but there was also the bright moon shining straight in at the window, so that as he sat there in his gray shirt, open in the neck and rolled back showing his wonderful chest, he looked like a picture in some old book I had seen — or maybe it was on the stained glass window of the big church in Montpelier I saw when we were there on a visit.



"We stopped a moment catching our breath as we glanced in at the window"

I guess we forgot for a minute, what we came for, for we both stopped and stared. We didn't even speak to Lige then or rap on the window but went quietly round to the back door and tapped softly, just as if there was nothing to get excited about in the whole world.

We didn't get an answer right away and we looked at each other, wondering if we should knock again. The quietness and hush of the place seemed to get hold of us and I guess, if we hadn't realized it was a pretty serious errand, we would have skipped back to the road and run for home.

Finally Nate knocked a little harder and then I knocked again and, Gee! it was such a relief to hear Lige's voice, just as natural as anything, shout "come in."

We pushed the door open, just in time to see Lige put the picture to his lips and then lay it on the table as he turned and strode toward us.

My! there was something there about Lige, so splendid and powerful, and so full of calmness and courage that it came over us all at once, how foolish our fears were. Lige was strong enough

to face any five of the villagers. They couldn't harm him, and it really seemed that, if they should try, all he would have to do would be to give them one look and they would either turn and run away or fall down and pray for mercy.

We felt almost cheap, when we told him what we came for. We went through it as well as we could, all the time wondering what he would say or do. He didn't seem a bit stirred up, or worried or surprised.

"But what do you boys think of me?" was his first question. He seemed to care more for that, than for any thought of harm that could come to him.

"Oh, we were sure there must be some mistake. We knew you couldn't harm Mary Withers, or anyone."

When we told him that, his face lighted up as if it was a great joy to know that we believed in him. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee," he said and then he turned and opened a book that lay on the table and read a passage which was something like this: "He that believeth on me, the things that I do he shall do,

and greater things, after I have gone to my father."

"Well, boys," he said, smiling, "I guess we don't want to fight anybody tonight. Lets go up into the hills and enjoy the moonlight. Give to every man that asketh, and resist not evil."

We thought he was talking kind of rambling-like but all the while he was getting into his clothes, and finally he took a blanket off the bed and threw it over his shoulder, blew out the candle, put it in his pocket and led the way out the back door, up over the rocks in the rear of the house and onto the trail through the woods, leading toward our camp on the hill.

The trail runs less than a quarter of a mile through the thick woods, then it comes out in the pasture which is dotted here and there with small spruce.

After a short climb Lige found an open space on the hillside where we could see all that went on in the valley without being seen by the people below. Here he spread out the blanket and laid down flat on his back and began to talk about the stars.

"Here's the chance we've been looking for, boys," he said, just as naturally as if it was a bright Sunday afternoon. "Now we can listen to the music of the spheres — and why not?" he asked. "We don't have to spoil a perfectly good night because someone else wants to fight," and he laughed softly and made room for us to lie down beside him on the blanket.

It seemed so queer, and yet such a natural thing to do that we laid down beside him, and all the time we were thinking that the folks, if they only knew, would swear Lige, and maybe all three of us were crazy.

But the earth felt so good to our backs, through the blanket, and the sounds of the night -- the crickets and the bull frogs down in the swamp — all sounded so natural — and the sky overhead was so glorious, that we heaved a sigh of real pleasure and repeated Lige's question, "Why shouldn't we?"

XIII

As I said before, the moon was shining and it was quite light — except now and then when a cloud was floating by — and the air was clear and crisp and just cold enough to make our blood tingle without being chilly. We could see the lights in the village and get a glimpse here and there of the road winding up through the woods toward Lige Golden's house. We could hear the roar of the brook in the valley, reminding us of the many happy hours we had spent fishing its beautiful deep pools and its glistening rapids.

Lige didn't say anything for quite a spell, and it seemed queer that anything could be so beautiful and so peaceful after what we had been hearing at the church. And here was Lige, the one who was being threatened with death and with tar and feathers as well, the one who was being accused by the villagers of all sorts of horrid crimes, lying between us two boys gazing calmly up at the stars. Down there in the valley we could hear angry voices and up here was what looked, for all the world, like peace and happi-

ness. It seemed as though either one or the other must be unreal like a dream, and I actually found myself rubbing my eyes like one trying to wake out of a sleep.

Then again it looked so queer — and I wasn't sure but it was a little bit cowardly—that a great strong man like Lige Golden should seem to be running away and not staying to fight it out. It wasn't like most of the men I knew, because quite often the mill hands would get drunk on Saturday nights and someone would start a row and perhaps one who prided himself on being a good fighter would get out in the road and dare the crowd to lay hands on him. We boys would gather round and it would be pretty exciting for a time, but it usually ended mostly in words.

And here was Lige Golden, by all odds the strongest man in town, not even getting excited over all the threats against him.

I guess Nate was thinking the same things for he finally said kind of under his breath, "I bet Lige could lick the whole bunch if he wanted to."

At this Lige laughed right out, and said "But why should I want to?"

"Well, I'd want to, I guess," Nate answered, "if they'd lied about me that way."

"But they haven't lied. They think they are right. I couldn't make them think differently if I knocked their heads off, could I? Let them have their heads a little longer. That's the only way." Then he added just as matter of fact as anything, "I knocked a man's head off one time. Would you like to hear about it?"

Well, that remark pretty near upset us, it was so unexpected and we thought of what Deacon Withers had said back at the meeting house—that perhaps Lige was a jail bird. It came over us all at once that perhaps the deacon was right after all, and that we were trusting ourselves all alone on the mountain side in the night with a murderer. We were too surprised to speak and I guess we moved away a bit without knowing it and Nate sat up and looked as uneasy as anything.

Lige didn't appear to notice but went on, "It was in the South Sea Islands and he was a canabal. Of course I had to do it to save my life, but I can't say I like to think about it even now.

Why would I want to injure one of our townspeople just on account of a misunderstanding which will all clear up in time? And it would be so unnecessary. I couldn't beat up the worst man in town but what there would be some one who loved him, and would be sorry for him, and have to suffer on account of it.

"Yes, I know I'm strong enough — but that makes me all the more careful. I wouldn't want to take any chances tonight. Don't you see how much better it is to come up here and enjoy the moonlight, while they have a chance to cool down a bit?

"As for the Deacon, I can fix him up in the morning, in about five minutes — and I'm not sure I'll wait even till morning. And the deacon is about the only one to consider after all. Poor old man. How I pity him. Are you still praying for him, boys? Well, keep right on, and tonight perhaps you'd better include me in your prayers, for maybe before morning I'll need a different sort of courage from the kind it took to knock off that canabal's head."

This set us to wondering again, but we were

soon roused by the noises which came from around Lige's house. We sat up now and listened. There was quite a crowd I guess by the sound, and we heard Lige's name called again and again. Then we heard a banging on the door and after a while we heard a smashing of glass as though a rock had been fired through the window.

They were stumping Lige to come out, but I guess they were afraid to go in.

We heard another window smash and a lot of pounding, but after a while they gave it up and started back toward the village. We saw groups of three or four along the road but couldn't make out just who they all were, but some of the voices we thought we knew. Anyhow it quieted down after a while and we were wondering if it would be safe to go down and look at the damage.

Lige's house is up pretty close under the bank so we couldn't see very much of the house, but we could see the clear space in front of the porch which makes the door yard.

Just as we rose to our feet, we saw something that made us stop suddenly. Three figures ran

out from the porch and stood looking back as if waiting for others.

"Well I guess they're not quite through yet, let's sit down and wait a bit," Lige said.

We began to talk again and Lige told us a lot about the stars and how many billions of stars there were, and how each star was a sun and had worlds like ours revolving about it like our sun had the plannets, and how far was the nearest star, and that some of the stars are so far away that the light wouldn't reach us for thousands of years, although they were made long before the days of Adam and Eve. And even we, right now, were living among the stars.

That's the kind of talk that makes one forget his troubles, or makes them seem pretty small, and I guess that is why Lige doesn't get excited like folks who don't dwell on such things, same as he does, and anyhow, he made us forget again all about what was going on down below.

Mr. Hardiman often talks about keeping one's mind on higher things but it's hard to keep one's mind on the things he talks about, while the things Lige talks about makes one forget every-

thing else; and so we forgot again till something happened that brought us back to earth with a start.

A cloud had just passed over the moon and it seemed quite dark for a spell, and then suddenly the sky lit up with a different sort of light from anything which we had noticed before.

Nate and I were thinking of Northern Lights and the aurora borealis I guess, but the next thing we knew Lige was on his feet, and for a minute we thought he *was* crazy.

But it didn't take long to find out what was the matter. Flames and sparks were coming up from the front of Elijah's house and the door yard was as light as day and you could see three figures running back and forth bringing dry branches and things from an old brush heap near by, and piling them up around the porch, which was all ablaze.

I never saw Lige so mad before and he said things that wouldn't be fit to print. I guess all the words he ever used fighting canabals came back to him, and for a minute or two we had visions of heads being knocked all over that door yard. He started down the hill on a run, his fists

doubled up and his eyes glaring like coals of fire.

We were too frightened to speak or run after him, and then, all at once, the most remarkable thing happened. He stopped suddenly on a little knoll just before reaching the woods and seemed to change into a different person. The moon came out and lighted up the place where he stood, light as day, and the flames beyond made a sort of halo about him and he seemed to loom up like some giant in a fairy tale. He stood there like one in a trance and was actually looking up at the stars.

Then it came over us that instead of a terrible giant he was more like one of the pictures in the old family Bible. Nate and I talked it all over afterwards and Nate said the only thing he could think of was the day of judgment. I guess we would have been on our knees in a minute saying our prayers, if just then Lige hadn't called back in that old familiar voice of his'n,

"Stay where you are. Don't come. It's all right. Wait till I get back — but you'd better pray for me though, because I guess I need it as much as any of them." Then he laughed and

added "Watch and pray. Watch and pray. I'll be back in a jiffy."

He passed over the knoll and seemed to settle into the earth, but we knew of course that he was just going down on the other side into the woods.

Well, we watched all right, and I guess we were praying pretty hard but we didn't close our eyes or make any sound, either of us, and we were sure, more than ever now, that it was all true, what Lige had taught us, that the most earnest prayers are those one doesn't shout from the house tops, or the hill tops.

I suppose we must have sat there five or ten minutes shivering, although we were not cold, but it seemed longer. Everything was pretty dry and the old house seemed to be going up like tinder. We were wondering what Lige would do; — whether he would go after the men or just try to put out the fire and save some of his treasures; but it didn't look as if he would have much chance to save them, for as near as we could judge the house would be one sheet of flames by the time he got there.

We could see the men standing back now as if

it was getting too hot for them to go near. Suddenly we heard the most blood curdling yell which seemed to come from all three at once, and they were standing still and pointing towards the flames as if they had seen some horrible sight.

Then they turned and ran as if frightened out of their wits. We expected to see Lige's form come out and follow them but no Lige appeared.

What had happened to Lige? Had the roof fallen in and buried him? We could not tell and we couldn't seem to move for the horror that came over us.

Every now and then we would catch glimpses of the three men running down the road toward the village,—running like mad,—but we couldn't see that Lige or any one was following them. We could tell pretty well who they were too, but we didn't care very much just then. Our thoughts were for Lige.

Well, we finally got our wits together, enough to think we'd better go down and find Lige — or what was left of him, but somehow our courage or something was all out of us. We got up, kind of limp like, and started down the path a little

ways, wondering how far we'd get and whether we'd dare enter the dark woods when we got there.

But just then out came the form of Lige looking pale and ghost-like against the black bank of trees. Before I thought, I said, "Who is it?" and I almost whispered it, but Lige answered "It is I. Be not afraid." And Lige was smiling. Think of it!

"It's all up in smoke," he said, "but I got what I went after" and he took something from his pocket which glistened in the moonlight. He held it up and examined it carefully, as if to see if it had been injured. "It's all right," he said, and then the look came into his face we had seen earlier in the evening through the window. We thought once there were tears in his eyes, as he stood there looking at the picture, but perhaps it was only that old twinkle we had seen so often.

"My matron saint," he said slowly, as if in a dream.

XIV

That was everything he had saved — the picture, and really it seemed as if it was all he cared for.

We went back to the blanket and sat down and then it was that Lige began to talk to us boys in a way we shall never forget. It wasn't so much different from what he had talked before but more earnest and more solemn.

Only once he laughed and that was when we told him about the yells of the men and how they ran. He laughed then and said there'd be a new ghost story for Jase Perkins to feed on, that would last him quite a spell. But then he didn't laugh harshly and acted more as if he pitied the men than anything else.

"Perhaps I made a mistake. Perhaps I should have done it differently," he mused, "and saved them all this trouble; but there you are! How can you help making mistakes? Life is all full of mistakes. We'll always be making mistakes. Life itself may be a mistake, but if it is, it is one big divine mistake, and the one divine thing in us

tells us not to mind, but to learn from our mistakes to go on, and on, and on."

He was sitting a little above us on a rock and as we looked up into his face while he was saying some of these things, it felt as if we were in the presence of some strange, almost divine person from another world who was teaching us lessons which we wouldn't fully understand perhaps in a whole life time.

And yet he was so simple and so natural.

"And I must go on," he said. "I guess my usefulness in this town is about over. But you boys — you boys — you have a great life ahead. You will never forget the things I have told you, but they will mean more and more as you go on, because they are the truths one only learns from deep experience. I know they are truth, and they are life, and you will know it.

"And remember it is the truth that makes us free. Not the truth from books alone, but the truth that grows from within and interprets all we see without, in terms of the *One Purpose*. Remember it is not two, but One. It cannot be two. We cannot think of it that way and be hap-

py. It is one — One!" It seemed to mean so much to him that he kept repeating it over and over.

Again he was looking off at the stars and we remembered what he had told us about their courses.

"And when you know deep down in your hearts there is only One Purpose in it all, you will know that you are just as much a part as any, and that I am a part, and Jase Perkins and Josh Bean and Joe Peneau — yes, they are all parts of the one purpose, and that Purpose is good. Then you will know how to love your enemies, for that is the only way it can ever be done."

"That is why we can pray for those who spitefully use us," I suggested, for it came to me all at once what that golden text meant I learned to say in Sunday School so long ago but didn't understand a bit till now. "Even Deacon Withers?"

"Yes!" Lige almost shouted, "I believe it!" and he brought his hand down on his knee so loud we were startled. Then he lowered his voice and went on as if speaking more to himself. "One Purpose — one Eternal Purpose — I am a part

and you are a part and Deacon Withers is a part. Three in one. Many in one. All in one."

Then he took out the little locket and opened it and gazed a long time at the face of the beautiful young woman, his "matron saint," and he kept saying softly, "Three in One, Three in One. The Eternal Mystery. To know that I am in thee and thou in me, and all are one. And this — this is life, — everlasting. That ye might know that I am in the father and that the father is in me. The eternal father — the eternal mother — the eternal son. Three in one — all in one."

I don't know if I've set this all down just as he said it, because it seemed sort of jumbled up at the time and does now, and I've wondered a good deal ever since, but I thought I'd best try to set it down because if Lige *wasn't* crazy, or kind of out of his head, I knew it must mean something pretty deep; and perhaps the meaning would come to me after a while, — and anyhow it will help me to make up my mind whether he was all right, or queer in the head sometimes, like people said he was.

Then all of a sudden he seemed to come back to

himself. "Don't you see how I couldn't *really* want to hurt those fellows even if they did burn my house down? Besides you boys up there were praying for me, and of course that meant that you were expecting something. Were you expecting good or expecting evil?" he asked, with a queer look.

I guess we didn't know what to say because we had been thinking and expecting that Lige would knock their heads off, and that it would be good enough for them.

But Lige read our thoughts just as easy as anything, as he always did. I don't believe one could ever keep any thing from Lige because he seemed to look right down into our hearts and to know everything that was there. Nate and I have often wondered how he could do it, if he hadn't some kind of gift, different from Mr. Hardiman and the others. Maybe it was because he believed we were all alike deep down, and I don't think the others did. I guess they thought they were good and we were bad, but that was their mistake, according to Lige's way of thinking.

"Well," Lige went on, "of course it was natural, and I couldn't blame you. But it was my thought of you boys back there that saved me, and I knew that deep down in your hearts you would pray right.

"Anger always means murder — and for a moment I had murder in my heart. It comes from the animals I suppose because there was a time when actual killing was the only way of getting satisfaction. Anger like that, when it doesn't have any way to let itself out, turns back on the one who is angry."

"And then what?" I asked.

"It murders just the same," he said thoughtfully.

"But you didn't die, did you?"

"Didn't I?" Lige answered. "Just think what died, or would have died if I hadn't found a way out and had gone on and on — that way. Suppose I hadn't knocked their heads off, but had just kept right on feeling as if I wanted to? Don't you see what I would have lost, and you would have lost? The Lige Golden you knew would have been dead. Yes, murdered just as much as

if you saw the blood streaming from his heart.

"And what would I have lost? All that to me is worth while — my peace, my happiness, my faith in the one purpose? Isn't that worth while? To find a way out like that?"

"And was that why you stopped so suddenly and seemed to grow so big?" I asked.

"Did I seem to grow big?" This amused him, and I wondered if he had *felt* what we seemed to *see*.

"You seemed like a giant," we told him.

"I wonder, I wonder!" and he was lost in thought.

We sat still quite a while after this and then Nate asked "Where are you going to sleep to-night?" for it came over us all at once it was getting awful late. The moon was settling down in the west and we were wondering what the folks would be thinking of at home. We didn't think it would be safe for Lige to go with us back to the village; and besides we didn't want the folks to know how we had warned Lige. We weren't ashamed exactly, but I guess we were a little bit afraid.

"How about the camp?" Lige asked.

That was just the thing, we all agreed, and we could bring Lige up some food in the morning, for everything of Lige's except what few clothes he had on was burned.

He told us he thought he'd better go away for a spell till matters settled down, but that we needn't worry about him. He would always find a place to lay his head.

"There is room enough in the world for all of us and we don't have to crowd one another." Then he looked toward the west and exclaimed, "Say boys it's going to be fine tomorrow! Let us go hence." And he picked up the blanket.

But instead of going up to the hut he walked along with us toward home, and we talked as we went along. We didn't go down to the road but went round through the fields and down through the hollow back of Deacon Withers' where we crossed the brook.

The Deacon's lot runs down to the brook back of the house. There is a lane leading up from the brook to the house through the orchard and garden, and this makes a short cut to the street, and

our house is across from the Deacon's only a little further down toward the Postoffice. Nate lives just a little way beyond, so we planned to go up this lane. The lights were all out at the deacon's, and for that matter most everywhere else as far as we could see.

We stopped at the foot of the lane, because we didn't think Lige would want to come any farther. We had been walking along pretty quiet as we got near the village and Lige seemed more and more thoughtful.

He was looking up at the deacon's. We said goodnight and left him standing there gazing, but he called us back softly. He seemed to want to say something more but acted as if he didn't know just how to say it.

"Boys" he said finally, "I shall always be with you. You will not forget — neither will I. Remember whatever you hear of me, I am the same Lige; and I'll always need you, and you will need me.

"And, as for the deacon," he hesitated, "remember — he is one of us."

He smiled, and waved, as we passed up among

the trees and the last we saw of him he was standing there at the foot of the lane smiling, but his eyes were on the window where he knew the deacon would be sleeping — that is, if he was asleep — and in his hand he held the locket which he had rescued from the flames, and which was now the last of all his earthly treasures.

XV

We almost tiptoed up the lane and past the deacon's. The street was deserted and so quiet we felt like thieves in the night. I guess neither of us had ever been out so late before. We were lucky and not even a dog barked. We didn't talk much but I guess we were pretty busy thinking.

Nate left me at the gate and started off on a run toward home. I took off my shoes and managed to get up to bed without waking any body. I guess the folks must have thought I was in bed when they got home or else they were so excited with what had happened that they forgot about me. Anyhow I felt pretty lucky when I found myself safely in bed.

I didn't go to sleep for a long time, there were so many things that kept coming up in my mind after all the excitement we had been through, and every time I dropped off a bit I would wake up with a sudden start and then some question would come up that I hadn't thought of before.

It's funny how many things come up that way when one is all alone in the dark, and how pic-

tures keep going round and round inside your head like the pan-o-rammer of Pilgrim's Progress that came to this place once and gave an exhibition in the town hall.

Lige told us a lot about those pictures once — the kind that come inside your skull — and said how those pictures were like seeds planted in the garden of the mind. He said it was wrong to punish a child by sending him to bed, because if a child went to bed angry he would have angry thoughts, and bad pictures would come up in his mind, and then he would have bad dreams. Then if he had bad dreams, after a while his dreams might come true.

So we must always go to bed with happy thoughts and only let such pictures come up as we want to have come true. Then we would always love to lie in bed even if we didn't go to sleep because it was the one time when we could make the world just as beautiful as we liked.

But in spite of all he had told us about lying calm and peaceful and making beautiful pictures in our minds which were to come true later in

life, I couldn't keep out a good many troublesome thoughts.

After all, what did we know about Lige Golden? And again where was Mary Withers? That question had not been answered and it kept coming up to me that Lige hadn't said a word about Mary but had talked about every thing else under the sun — or stars — and maybe he had done it on purpose to keep us from asking about her.

Then, if Mary was in any kind of trouble, was it Lige's fault or somebody else he was shielding?

Lige was a funny character and most of the church people were down on him and perhaps they had reasons that we boys didn't know about.

Then there was that picture of the other Mary that he called his matron saint which he seemed to care so much about. Perhaps that was Lige's girl or his wife who had died or run away or something and maybe he wanted Mary Withers, because she was like the other Mary. And then it came over me that they did look a good deal alike — especially when Mary laughed and was gay.

Why hadn't we asked more about the lady in

the picture? And would Lige have told us if we had? Lige always had such a way of telling us just enough to make us curious, and then leading us off on some other subject so we forgot to ask what was on our minds.

Well, I finally dropped off to sleep; and then I dreamed that Lige was a sort of Blue Beard and there was a trap door in his kitchen leading down into the cellar, and we were listening and we thought we heard Mary Withers crying down there and we were just lifting up the door when Lige came in looking angry.

We dropped the door with a bang which woke me up. It was only the window blind which slammed to, in the wind.

I got up to fix it and then I noticed there was a light in deacon Withers' house which hadn't been there before, because we had noticed that Lige had been looking up at that window when we left him, and the house had been all dark.

I watched quite a while and once I got a shadow on the curtain but I couldn't be sure whether it was the deacon or not. Somehow it made me think of Lige and what he had said earlier in the

evening, that he could fix the deacon in five minutes and perhaps he wouldn't wait till morning. But I waited and waited, what seemed a long time — and the light still burned. What could it mean?

The deacon was alone since Mary went. Maybe he was sick, and I kind of pitied him and wondered if someone ought not to be told. Could it be that Lige had gone in and wakened him that time in the night and if so what would he be doing to him?

Finally I heard the clock strike three and I got back into bed shivering and pulled the bedclothes over my head. I guess I was scared of my thoughts.

Then I tried again to think up some good thoughts to go to sleep on, and I thought of what Lige told us about the one purpose and the three in one, and the many in one, and how we must always remember that the deacon was one of us. That thought seemed to sooth me somehow although I couldn't exactly understand what it meant, and before I knew it I was dreaming again.

This time I seemed to be in a school room, and the school was in Lige's house, in the room where all the idols and things were, and the old god Budda sat on the washstand teaching us.

Nate was there and quite a number of the boys and girls we knew. Old Phil Shackford was sitting on a keg and swaying back and forth, like we had seen him many a night down at the store, and Jase Perkins was off in one corner looking white and scared like he wanted to jump out the window.

I looked round for Mary Withers and finally I saw her sitting with her head on her desk and she was sobbing as if her heart would break.

And the old Budda god was swaying back and forth something like Phil Shackford. Pretty soon we were all doing it. Then the Budda began to make a droning noise and we tried to imitate him.

Every once in a while, one of the other gods would come up and push Budda and say, "not that way but this way." Then we would sway from side to side.

Then the funny little south sea island god hopped up and down on the table and said "this

way" and we all got up and began to dance, all but Mary, who kept sobbing in her seat.

Pretty soon all the gods were doing it, some one way and some another and all shouting to us to do as they did.

Well, we were hopping and dancing and swaying and droning out the most unearthly sounds, and all the time it kept getting hotter and hotter and we couldn't stop but had to keep it up, or some of the gods would get angry and dart fire at us, out of their eyes and nostrils.

There was an old Chinese dragon god got after Jase Perkins and he was running about the room like mad. They tipped over the lamp and a big smoke began to rise up from the floor and then flames and then everybody shouted "fire" and "door." But somehow we couldn't seem to find any door out, and all the windows had iron bars across them, and every time we thought we had found a way out, we would be going into the fireplace or some dark room, where the darkness and the smoke would drive us back.

Well, I tried to cry out and I couldn't. Then

I remembered thinking perhaps it was all a dream and I must try to wake up.

But just then there was a breath of fresh air from some place, and a voice which was welcome, I can tell you. It was Lige's voice and it said "Follow me."

Pretty soon we were out of the burning house and as we ran up the trail, we could hear the crackling flames behind us and we knew we were safe, but when we looked back we could see, in the flames, first one god and then another rise up and fall back to rise no more.

There were quite a number of us, and we ran up the trail through the woods and into the pasture beyond, where we had been sitting the evening before.

Phil Shackford, with beads of sweat on his forehead, and puffing like a steam engine, wanted to sit down and rest, but Lige had gone on ahead and kept beckoning us in the moonlight. We struggled on to keep him in sight.

Jase Perkins, I remember, was one of the first to stop and then run off toward home as fast as his legs would carry him. I guess Phil Shack-

ford must have stopped somewhere to rest for we lost sight of him. Anyhow, after a while there was only Nate and I and we were panting up the mountain side with Lige always quite a distance in the lead. Every little while we would lose sight of him and call out, and always his voice kept coming back "Follow me."

He went on and on and on. And then, as we began to get near the top of the mountain, he began to get dimmer. Larger and dimmer. He finally seemed more like a great cloud sweeping off up into the sky but always, beckoning, beckoning.

Well, when we reached the summit the cloud had passed away altogether and with it Lige, and there we were alone, looking up at the stars. We called "Lige! Lige!" but no answer came from anywhere.

Then we looked back and there was Mary Withers looking more like an angel than a real person and her face was like the face in the picture, only more beautiful. And that was all I remember of the dream.

I woke up with a start and the bright sun was

shining in at the window and I knew it must be well along in the forenoon.

Mother had been in and opened the window and taken off some of the bedclothes, and I guess that was when I dreamed Lige led us out into the air.

XVI

Lucky it was Saturday and no school. The first thing I thought of was Elijah and how we had promised to bring him up some food the first thing in the morning. Now it was after ten o'clock. Would he wait for us at the camp or come down to the village?

I ate my breakfast as quickly as possible and managed to hook a few things for Lige, then I went down and called for Nate. He had left home half an hour before and gone down toward the sawmill. I wondered why he hadn't come up for me, but pretty soon I met him.

He had been over to the blacksmith shop and Lige was not there, but Bill Straiter showed Nate a note he found under his door from Lige, saying he thought it better not to come back for a few days. That meant he might be up at the camp waiting for us. So we started for the camp.

We were wondering if it would be safe to cut through the deacon's lot when, who should we meet, but the deacon himself. We remembered to smile and *he smiled back* and then I noticed,

for the first time, what nice white teeth he had, different from most of the old men we knew in the village, whose teeth, when they had any, were stained with tobacco juice. It came to me then that the deacon must have been fine looking once and was pretty well preserved, for his years, due to his strict habits of life.

We hesitated a little and the deacon read our thoughts and said, "All right boys—only be careful to put up the bars."

As we ran down the lane Nate was chuckling "Another miracle! Gee, it's working almost before we've had time to get it started." He meant about the praying stunt Lige had told us how to do Sunday.

Well, when we got up to the camp there was the blanket where he lay, and on it was pinned a little birch bark note. It said:

"I hope, boys, to see you again, perhaps in a few days, but if I don't come back do not worry. There is room enough and I'll always be somewhere in the world — waiting for you.

LIGE."

That was all. Nothing to tell us where he had gone, or who he really was, or anything, and it seemed as if a great big something had gone out of our lives.

Then I thought of my dream and told Nate — and now, we stood here by the camp, gazing up at the mountain which reminds me sometimes of the face of Elijah, and the same feeling came over me as I felt in the dream when we were left alone looking up at the stars.

We wandered slowly down the trail toward Lige's place or what was left of it, but we didn't talk much. I guess we were thinking the same things, and we went along silently, as if we had agreed before hand what we would do.

When we finally came out of the woods we saw that the fire had burned everything to the ground. It had rained a little sometime in the night, which had cooled off the ashes and everything looked pretty dreary. I can tell you, where such a short time ago, we had spent some very happy hours.

We sat down a little distance apart on some rocks just at the edge of the clearing. Somehow we didn't feel much like going any nearer. Some-

thing seemed to say "It's all over." A sadness came over me like one feels at a funeral, only I knew of course that Lige was all right and waiting for us somewhere in the world.

Suddenly Nate, who was a little further down towards the ruins, put up his finger for silence and then crept cautiously back to where I was sitting.

"Voices," he whispered, "women's voices down in Lige's cellar."

Gee, one wouldn't believe how that startled me. My first thought was of my dream, that Lige had Mary Withers locked up in his cellar — that was foolish of course, but I guess my nerves were pretty much on edge after all we'd been through.

The floor boards were pretty well burned off, but a few beams here and there prevented our seeing down into the cellar from where we sat. There was a bulkhead with stone steps leading down from the outside and we began cautiously to work our way round to the side where it was situated.

But before we reached it we recognized the loud voice of old Maggie Gillis, and pretty soon the quiet voice of Carrie Finny. We got up near

and listened quite a while through the beams, before we let them know we were there.

Old Maggie was saying "No hide nor hair of him any where. God rest his soul! I think he must have been transported."

"Translated I guess you mean" Carrie said softly.

"Translated it is then, in a chariot of fire like Elijah of old. Sure, a prophet of Israel he must have been, sent by God to redeem us from our sins. He was in our midst and we knew him not. Saints preserve us."

They say Maggie worked in a convent before she met Jack Gillis, who ran away to California and left her alone with the child he gave her. Anyhow Maggie never forgot her Saints — and she could repeat Scripture by the yard.

"Perhaps he did not perish in the flames after all," we heard Carrie say gently.

"And could it have been his spirit hovering round in the flames that the boys saw," Maggie went on, "or was he a spirit intirely, with no flesh and bones at all? I'm thinking, there should be some remains left, if that is not so."

"But the boys were excited and they imagined they saw him in the flames."

"Well maybe, I hope so. Indeed I do. He's a good man and should be comin' back — I don't care what they say, and I don't believe it at all, at all. Mary Withers was a wild little tomboy and not too bad if she'd had a mother to control her. But she's not the kind, a man like Lige Golden would be runnin' away with. It's lies, I believe, the men have been puttin' over on him." The women were peering around and poking over the ashes and they had picked up a few bits of crockery and things which they were keeping for trinkets.

"And what is that now?" Maggie was saying. "Is it a saint or a devil or just some ornament that's taken his fancy in some part of the world. I'll keep it in remembrince anyhow."

They were coming out now, so we went round to the bulkhead and told them that Lige was still living and all right, but when they asked us how we knew and had we seen him, we stammered and didn't know what to say because we had agreed we wouldn't tell anybody, for the present, our

part in Lige's escape. Maggie came to our rescue.

"Well never mind, young men, we know how ye feel and we feel that way ourselves. It's angels ye be for wantin' to comfort us, though ye don't know any more than ourselves." Then she added "But ye are some of his best friends, I've been told, and if we didn't believe so much in Lige, we might not be takin' stock in you, because I've heard bad things of you two lately. Ye was his friends now, wasn't ye?"

We told her that we were, and that we knew the stories were all lies and we would always believe Lige innocent even if he never came back.

But we didn't know what to say about Mary Withers. That still puzzled us, and we didn't want to talk about it any more than we had to, so we said nothing, and making excuses hurried down the road to the village.

* * * * * * *

Well there isn't much more to say about Lige Golden I guess, because we haven't heard a word and now it's going on two weeks, and we don't

know whether or not we shall ever hear from him again.

The village is settling down in the old way and the bad feeling seems to be dying out about Lige, first because he had so many friends who still stick up for him, folks like Phil Shackford, who is going straight as a string, and others that Lige helped one way or another. But the principal reason I think is that Deacon Withers won't say a word against him, and says Mary is coming back in time, and everything will be all right.

So I guess it would be pretty safe for Lige to come back though it might make some people feel pretty sheepish. Maybe that is one reason why he stays away because Lige really never liked to hurt anybody's feelings.

XVII

Hip hip hurrah! Three cheers for Lige Golden! What's the matter with Lige? He's all right! Who's all right? Lige Golden is all right! Hip hip and hip hip hurrah!

Well that's what every body heard all round the village last night even if it was Sunday. And Lige can have anything he wants about here, first because *he knows how to get it,* and second because we would give it to him.

Anyhow Deacon Withers says he will have the old Sarah Woods house rebuilt and will present it to the town for a library and museum as a memorial to our esteemed fellow citizen Elijah Golden; or if Lige wants it, he can have it to do what he likes, but I guess it won't be good enough for him to live in for he will be a rich man and able to own the finest farm in the county.

But I'm going back and write it all down just as it happened and just as it would be in a story book because it beats all the fairy tales I ever read and what's more, it's true.

Well it was two weeks ago Friday night or Sat-

urday morning that Lige went away. How he went or where, nobody knows. He just dropped out of sight as mysterious as he came, — from nobody knows where, but of course we kept thinking every day we would hear from him.

Then there was Mary Withers. Her disappearance was just as mysterious and seemed to be somehow connected with the mystery about Lige.

And to make it more puzzling there was the Deacon going about as usual only pleasanter and when anybody would ask for Mary — or mention the mystery about Lige and Mary, the deacon would smile and his eyes would twinkle for all the world like Lige's, and then he would say something that wouldn't give any satisfaction at all only make one puzzle all the more.

Well, Sunday morning at church we got a sensation. That was our first surprise. After the sermon, Deacon Withers walked up the aisle to the pulpit with a letter in his hand, and after whispering a minute to Mr. Hardiman said he had a communication from the governor he would like to read.

He said "the governor," but he meant ex-gov-

ernor Fairbain who lives down below the Ville in a big mansion he built last summer because he is interested in the lumber business hereabouts and he liked the location for a summer residence.

The letter said he had a matter of vital interest to the town's people which he wished to bring before them at four o'clock and he would meet them in the church. As the matter concerned every one in the town — men, women and children — he hoped for a good attendance.

I was mighty glad when he said everybody because it's not every day a fellow gets to see an ex-governor. We had often seen his son Dick or Richard who comes up to look after the mill interests of the lumber company, or to fish in the Dishmill, but we had never seen the governor and we were mighty anxious to hear what he had to say.

Well, about a quarter of four while the church bell was ringing the governor's rig came up through the village and it was some rig I can tell you. He had the slickest pair of chestnut horses I ever saw all prancing and gay — fancy harness with shiny buckles and ornaments — and the

driver had a blue uniform with brass buttons and a stove pipe hat. The governor was seated inside the most gorgeous coach that ever came into these parts I guess — and by his side was his son Dick all dressed up and looking more distinguished than we had ever seen him before.

We all made a rush for the meeting house, but the carriage didn't stop and it went right on till it reached Deacon Withers' where it pulled up and the governor got out and went in. Then in a minute or two he came out and the carriage started along but stopped again pretty quick and seemed to be waiting for the deacon or something.

We stood outside the church watching and wondering what they were waiting for when all of a sudden somebody shouted, "For heavens sake see what's coming!" and when we looked back there was another carriage coming up the street just like the first one, only lovlier and with gray horses. You better believe that made us stare, but the curtains in this one were all down tight and we couldn't make out whether it was empty or had folks inside.

Gee! you ought to have heard the guesses, but

I won't stop to set them down now. It was funny though, and funnier still when this carriage drove right up past the church like the first one did and stopped before the deacon's door.

"Well by gummy! He's sent his private carriage to bring the deacon down to the church," some one exclaimed.

"Maybe he's sold out his share of the lumber business to the deacon," another one went on, and someone else wanted to know why he would be doing business on Sunday anyhow? And so the remarks kept going round — till the deacon came out and got into the carriage.

Then both carriages made a wide sweep and came back down past the church before turning into the yard and finally drew up before the doors of the church — one carriage stopping at the left door, and the other at the right.

The driver on the governor's carriage got down off the box and opened the door and the Governor and his son passed in and up the left hand aisle.

Then the driver on the other carriage opened the door and first the deacon got out, then he turned and helped a very lovely, tall, dignified old

lady and somebody whispered "It's the governor's sister in law Miss Sarah Wilkins." But the next minute a shout went up they must have heard in the church because every body that could was crowding about the doors and everywhere.

The deacon was standing on one side and Miss Wilkins on the other and right between them appeared the form of Mary Withers all dressed in white and holding a beautiful boquet of white roses and smiling as if she was the happiest creature God ever made.

And she looked just as she did in my dream after Elijah disappeared in a cloud and we looked back and saw Mary standing beside us and we thought she was an angel, and that perhaps she was dead and had come back to comfort us. Well she wasn't dead because she was looking round and laughing and calling us all by name and saying

"Oh! I'm so glad you all came to my wedding and I'm going to be the happiest girl in all the world!"

Then the music started and they marched up

the other aisle, and Mr. Hardiman was waiting for them and the governor and his son stood up and the deacon gave Mary to Richard and they were married. And everybody came up and shook hands with the governor and the deacon and Miss Wilkins and congratulated Richard and kissed the bride.

And when we went up — Nate and I — Mary grabbed us and kissed us like we were her long lost brothers and she whispered,

"Oh! I've got a lovely message for you. Come over to the house after the wedding as quick as you can. I can't wait to tell you."

Then she called us back and whispered, "Lige has gone to the gold fields with Dick's cousin, Bennie Atwood, but don't forget to come over for I've got lots to tell."

So we didn't lose much time after the wedding and when they all went back to the deacon's for dinner, Nate and I were standing by the gate and Mary whispered as she passed us,

"Wait in the garden. I'll be down in a jiffy."

Pretty soon she came down and Dick was with

her and she introduced us again and said we were Lige's best friends.

Then she told us right before Dick — and Dick smiling all the time as if he thought it the best thing that ever happened, — how she had been on the point of running away or doing something desperate because she loved Dick so and thought she had no right to, because he was the governor's son and so very rich and everything, while she was only a poor country girl; — and how Lige had taken her up to his house and talked to her and then let her stay all night because she was so stubborn she wouldn't go home; — how he slept in the shed and got up next morning and drove her down to Miss Wilkins and told her what to do; — and then later, how he saw Dick and brought him to his senses; — and pulled the governor round and everything; and then finally, how the governor had taken to Lige and fitted him and his wild young nephew out to go West in search of gold.

She said that Lige was always talking about his boys and how he wanted them all to come to the wedding, and that he had planned everything

even to the closed carriage, and the dinner we were going to have with Maggie Gillis to wait on the table; and then, after it was all planned out, he took the train, only the night before, for the great wide West, saying that if he went back now it might not be so pleasant for some of the villagers on account of the house being burned and he wanted everyone to be happy.

Then she told how Lige went to her father in the night because he didn't want him to suffer any more and explained everything; and how by some magic he had changed her father over so wonderfully that she couldn't believe her own senses he was so lovely and dear.

We went in to dinner and the deacon sat down at the head of the table while Mary sat at the other end and poured the tea as she had done so many times before. Dick sat on the deacon's left and Miss Wilkins on his right while the governor sat next to Mary. That left an empty place between Miss Wilkins and Mary.

We boys had a little side table because there wasn't room for both of us at the big table, but we could see and hear everything and we were

wondering who was to sit in the empty place. Well, what do you think?

That place was for Phil Shackford and Lige had fixed it all up that way and one of the carriages had gone up after him. Lige said he would like Phil to be there for a special reason and if there had been room he would have invited the whole family but Phil must be there anyhow and so it had to be done — every thing just as Lige had pictured it out in his mind. Lige certainly was some fixer.

Well pretty soon Phil was driven up, all in his best clothes and looking fine; but a little bashful I guess in such company, and sitting next to the governor's sister.

We knew the secret reason why Phil was there because Mary had told us. We knew too, that Lige was carrying out his plans about reforming Phil and we knew now that whatever Lige started he finished in grand style. Well, Phil was to be the new superintendent of the mill but he didn't know it yet, and he wanted him to meet the Governor, who would get him appointed at the next meeting of the board of directors.

Then, when we were all seated and Deacon Withers asked the blessing, his voice was wonderful soft and mellow, and when he mentioned the stranger lately in our midst who came to his own and his own received him not, we knew he meant Lige, and the deacon's voice trembled, and he got out his pocket handkerchief and wiped his eyes when he said the amen, like he had lost his only son. I guess we all felt the same way and said amen in our hearts, again and again, if we didn't speak it out loud.

The letter immediately following appeared in the *Lynnville Times* shortly after the publication of the foregoing manuscript, and is from the widow of the late Judge Benjamin Atwood, — clearly seen to be no other than the "wild young nephew" of the old ex-governor, who went west with Lige "in search of gold." This letter seemed a fitting tribute to *our hero* and a subtle ending to a very pretty story; but when, a week later, another epistle arrived from a most unexpected quarter, the editor was too stunned for expression. Both documents are here appended and we leave our readers to battle with their own emotions. *(The Publisher.)*

Peoria, Ill.

Editor, Lynnville Times.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your kind request, permit me to say that while I did not know Elijah Golden personally, my late husband not infrequently referred to him as a most revered friend who had done him an inestimable service.

It now appears that while they were prospecting together in Nevada in the early eighties, Elijah Golden insisted on going to prison to shield my husband who was a younger man and engaged to a girl back East. I was that girl.

Needless to say, with my husband's death and the added shock of his confession I am considerably agitated, but I can testify to the fact that the influence of this mysterious individual upon my husband was remarkable. During our long and happy married life I have always felt that there was some hallowed memory associated in my dear husband's mind with this name.

I may be pardoned for a just pride in the fact that my husband, who, I have heard, was a wild

lad, became one of the most respected citizens of our state.

It is pathetic indeed to think of Elijah Golden dying alone, uncared for, and in prison for a crime of which he was innocent, and that I, who, in a sense was the cause, should be unable to visit him. While my husband guarded his secret up to the day before his death, I have every reason to believe that he did not forget his friend and was more or less directly in touch with him and his needs to the last.

I shall be very grateful if you will send me whatever articles you may publish relative to this saintly and, may I say, Christlike character.

Very respectfully yours,

LUCRETIA ATWOOD.

(Mrs. Benjamin Atwood)

Somewhere in the World.

Editor, Lynnville Times.

Dear Sir:

I have read with peculiar interest, not unmixed with some genuine amusement, your story of Elijah Golden. May I say that I am in a position to vouch for most of the facts as stated, and, in a larger sense perhaps, testify to the value of many of his teachings, having tested them throughout a long lifetime, and under varying circumstances.

I am strongly moved to protest, however, some of the inferences which have been made, and especially that of your correspondent, Mrs. Atwood, referring to him as a saintly or "Christ-like character." Moreover, I doubt seriously if he should be regarded as a hero, *even in the rescue of Charlie Whiting, where he acted merely as any sane man of his physical strength and training would surely have done. I have known hardened criminals, more than once, to risk life in the impulse to aid a fellow in danger or distress.*

Neither would I regard Lige Golden a martyr

in any sense of the word. He loved life too well to sacrifice it needlessly, and, much as the following information may shock and pain your more sensitive readers, I am prepared to prove that he did not *die in prison.*

While a "non-combatant" on principle, he did not hesitate to use his somewhat exceptional attainments, on occasion, to further his own welfare. If he failed to fulfil some of the ideals which have become standardized by tradition, it goes to show that he was quite an ordinary mortal, tempted in all points, like the rest of mankind. It may truthfully be said in his behalf that he loved mercy and hated injustice. He also regarded life better than death; and service better than sacrifice. With this in mind perhaps some of his evil deeds may be regarded with a shade of of charity.

As your readers are now aware, Elijah Golden had an extensive knowledge of magic or the art of misdirection, which he acquired largely in the East. He was also an expert locksmith. With his usual capacity for "fixing things," it was but natural (although unusual) that he should walk

out of prison one fine night, breathing an air of relative innocence, and leaving another prisoner — a lifer — locked securely in his cell; but the interesting part of the story is, that this prisoner voluntarily *assumed the name of Elijah Golden and kept it, up to the time of his death.*

It is furthermore a matter of prison record, that Jack Curran — a "lifer," — and dangerous character, escaped(?) about this time; and there is little to show that any serious attempt was made to apprehend him. That these events could take place with almost no publicity may now perhaps be explained: — a well known judge and an ex-governor from another state having passed to their reward, it will be hard *to* convict. *Suffice to say, no actual injustice was involved, and even Jack Curran proved a real man* on the inside.

It will interest your readers to learn, what perhaps some have already surmised, — and I can no longer see any good reason for keeping it secret, — that Lige Golden was in reality the "only son" of Deacon Withers, and that Mary Withers was thus his own little half-sister in the flesh. These facts, curiously, were not known even to the

parties most interested — viz: father and son — until that eventful night when the boys left Lige standing alone at the foot of the lane. It was his "matron saint" who guided him to that little upper room and brought restoration and peace; — "that other Mary," who gave her life at his birth.

Would the boys like to ask any more questions? As an escaped convict it may be wise to keep my whereabouts unknown, but you can address the publishers.

Do his eyes still twinkle? Yes. And it's fun — lots of fun — just to be living.

Eternally yours,

LIGE.