

Lay of the Has-Been.

Oh, sing me the song of the bowl and the stem,
The song of the might have been;
The song of the day when your kick was full.

Remember the time that you broke the bank
Down at the Branch one night—
You stacked so high that the ceilings bulged.

Once on a time, down at Brighton Beach,
Or was it old Jerome?
You backed a horse at one hundred to one.

Oh, warble to me; it will come again—
You must get another start;
And you'll think of the fellows that helped you spend.

WITH THE HELP OF UNCLE BILLY
By LUELLA LEACH
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Janet had reasons of her own for choosing the orchard path. The front lane, leading from the road to the barnyard, lay full in sight of Grandmother's sitting-room windows, and Janet was not yet strong enough with her defense for the coming battle.

While Uncle Billy might not be able thoroughly to comprehend the emotions of eighteen, yet Janet felt intuitively that she could count on him as an ally. At any rate, she would in-trench herself for the fight behind a bulwark of knowledge as to the enemy's exact position.

The restful twilight dusk was closing around her as she slipped down the secluded path. She knew she would find him at the evening milking.

"Uncle Billy," she called breathlessly through the fence.

The sound of the milk streaming into the tin pail ceased for an instant. "Is that thee, Janet?" the man asked in the same hushed voice.

For answer, she scrambled through the bars, pushing aside the inquisitive nose of big Bess, who had already contributed her share toward filling the shining buckets lined up under Uncle Billy's watchful eye.

"Does she know, Uncle Billy?" Janet whispered, with a guilty glance around at the cows who were staring at her in mild-eyed disapproval.

"Well, I reckon she does," the old man admitted reluctantly.

"But who could have told her this time?" the girl asked hopelessly. "You didn't tell, Uncle Billy?" She looked at him sharply, in sudden suspicion.

"Janet, child, what does thee take me for?"

Janet was instantly penitent and patted the battered old felt hat lovingly.

"Is it very wrong, Uncle Billy, to love somebody awfully, awfully?" she pleaded insinuatingly, with her arm about his neck.

"I can't exactly say that it is," Uncle Billy vouchsafed, hesitatingly. He was engaged in a deep study of the white spot on old Brindle's side, which came on a level with his eyes as he sat on the milking stool.

"Then you're on my side," she ex-

ulted gleefully. "And what else can I do if Grandmother won't let him come to the house? Besides, I do love him," she added with tremulous tenderness; "in the spring, he is going to have a beautiful position, as soon as that new railroad begins to build. You know it was engineering he studied at college. And then—and then—"

Uncle Billy didn't have the heart to arouse her from her rosy dream, but she soon came back to earth of her own accord.

"Was she angry, really angry when she heard?" she pursued anxiously.

"I guess thee doesn't know thy grandmother," retorted Uncle Billy dryly, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes that was lost upon Janet, because of his having resumed the milking operation.

"I don't care," the girl cried hotly. "I'd do it again. I'd go with him a thousand times, if she had a whole regiment of infantry stationed there to keep me from it. So there!" And with this burst of defiance she flung herself out of the barnyard.

But that was prior to her encounter with Grandmother.

Uncle Billy followed more leisurely with the brimming pails.

"I'll wager on Asenath," he chuckled to himself, yet with sympathy in his heart for the child.

Grandmother had long ago convinced him that the use of the word "bet" was far beneath the dignity of a man of his years, so he had learned to console himself with the weak substitute, "wager," and managed to convey the same impetuous conviction by dint of a more lavish expenditure of emphasis.

Uncle Billy's prognostications as to the result of the affray proved to be not unfounded. As he was setting the pails of foaming milk on the kitchen table, Janet burst into the room, slamming the door with savage energy. The soft pink of her cheeks was ablaze with anger, and rebellion radiated from the tip of every crisp, curling hair.

"I'm not ashamed, and I'll never, never say so," she cried hysterically. "He's as good as we are if he does bring us our mail. I love him and I'd rather have him than the king of England." Then she broke down, sobbing.

"Why, Janet," Uncle Billy began pacifically. But perhaps it was just as well that Grandmother appeared at the doorway, for he couldn't think of another word to say.

With the coming of Grandmother,



Had reasons of her own for choosing the orchard path.

Janet rushed stormily out at the opposite door. Grandmother looked after the flying figure sternly.

"Billy," she said reproachfully. "I do hope thee has not been upholding that child in her waywardness."

Uncle Billy was washing his hands at the kitchen sink. His mumbled reply was interpreted by Grandmother as a denial of such treacherous duplicity, so she disappeared, slightly mollified.

It was truly surprising, during the next few days, the number of things Grandmother found for Janet to do between the hours of four and five; and for Grandmother to ask to have a task performed was synonymous with its completion—or inevitable consequences for the offender.

One afternoon, when the earth was warm with the coming of spring, Grandmother fell asleep. Scarcely daring to wait to assure herself of the blessed fact, Janet stole out and slipped down the lane.

"Poor Carl," she sighed happily; "now I can tell him what has kept me from coming all this time."

With a fearful glance, now and then, toward the house, she skirted along in the edge of the apple orchard, waiting behind an immense lilac bush for the coming of the cart whose familiar rattle she heard in the distance.

Alas for the fulfilment of her fond dream! Uncle Billy was coming down the lane! The sickening truth forced itself upon her; Grandmother had missed her and had sent him to watch.

For a moment, her sight was blurred by rushing tears of angry disappointment, but when the mist cleared, an amused smile was hovering about the pouting lips.

"Why, he's trying to hide, too," she murmured in surprise, peering from behind her sheltering bush; "I wonder if he's afraid I'll see him. Poor thing!" The spirit of fellow-feeling was strong in her heart.

"It's too funny," she giggled hysterically, as he dodged from tree to tree, and at last slid behind the hedge across the road, with a final furtive glance toward Grandmother's ever inquisitive windows.

But the laugh didn't help the heart-ache. Carl's dear face was anxious and despairing and the boyish eyes were full of wistful longing, as she snatched a stealthy glimpse from behind the lilac bush.

Several sullenly unhappy days dragged by, and then another stolen visit—and Uncle Billy!

"I won't stand it," she raged passionately; "I'll see him to-morrow if the skies fall."

But fate played into her hands the next day; Grandmother went to sleep and Uncle Billy was away.

Carl was poking a letter into the box with shaky fingers when she came upon him from her retreat.

He held her close for a moment, then looked at her with wet eyes, as she stood smiling tremulously at him.

"They've been treating you mean, haven't they? Poor dear!" he said brokenly.

"It's Grandmother," Janet answered, with the old stubborn ring in her voice.

Perhaps half an hour passed before Carl awoke to the fact that he had some more mail to scatter along the road.

"Come, Janet," he said masterfully, "I won't let you go back—to her."

Janet looked into his eyes—and went, serenely ignoring Grandmother's autocracy, with a carelessness of consequences that was bliss to her rebellious soul.

He helped her into the old cart as deferentially as if she were a queen, and she accepted the homage as graciously.

"You see, dear, I heard just to-day that my job would be ready for me by the first, and then we'll be so happy together, little sweetheart."

"Oh, Carl!" gasped Janet, clutching his hand with the grip of despair. She could say no more, but pointed with a quaking finger down the road to an advancing buggy.

"It's Uncle Billy," she whispered frantically, impatient of his dullness. The comfortable jogging of old Belle was unmistakable.

"Never mind, dear; it's too late to go back now," Carl said exultantly, with his protecting arm about her.

It was easy for him to be brave. It was not his Uncle Billy.

Suddenly, Janet made a discovery. "There's somebody with him," she breathed excitedly. "What if it's Grandmother!"

The thought was too awful for sane contemplation, so she thrust it aside.

With thumping hearts and wretched, averted gaze, they moved on to meet their fate. For years, the red-gold disk of the sun, just slipping out of sight, recalled to Janet the awful tensivity of those moments.

After what seemed hours of tortured waiting, Janet looked up to meet Uncle Billy's jovial countenance, brimming with surprised mirth. The lady at his side—who was not Grandmother—seemed to share the frivolity of his emotions.

"Oh, Uncle Billy," gasped Janet, in immeasurable relief.

"Is thee running away, Janet?" he



Came upon him from her retreat. asked with a comic masquerade of severity.

"I'm—we're—why, you see, Uncle Billy—"

"Let me make thee acquainted with thy new aunt—Aunt Sarah, Janet," said Uncle Billy, interrupting her blundering explanation.

Janet could only stare stupidly. Facts were jumbling themselves together too confusedly for her comprehension.

"She came from Indiana just this afternoon and—and I think thee'll find the preacher at home," Uncle Billy went on placidly.

"You don't mean—why, Uncle Billy, does Grandmother know?" Janet managed to blurt out at last. Her courage was rebounding with wonderful alacrity at the detection of a fellow-conspirator.

"Bless thee, child, not if Uncle Billy could help it," ejaculated the old man, with the characteristic twinkle playing about his eyes. "But I reckon the time of confession is not far off," he added whimsically.

"Oh, you dear Uncle Billy," cried Janet rapturously, reaching out and clutching his coat in the joy of her discovery; "it was your own affair you were looking after, and I thought you were spying for Grandmother!"

"Run along, now, children," said Uncle Billy, giving old Belle a tap that terminated the interview, "go and find thy happiness, and I'll—I'll tell Grandmother."

Governmental Thoughtfulness.

"Soldiers who read of the campaign in Manchuria, where Japs and Russians suffer from the cold, are often reminded of the thoughtfulness of Uncle Sam for his soldiers," said Sergeant Stanley, on duty at the recruiting station at Eighth and Main streets. "I remember when I was on duty with the Seventh Infantry in Alaska, the government sent us a patent fire starter. It was in cans, and no matter how far we were from civilization, we could touch a match to a can of that stuff and have an instantaneous fire. The government even gave us looking-glasses to carry in our pockets. It's so cold there that a soldier freezes his nose, ears or hands quickly and does not know it until too late. We could look into those glasses and if we saw our nose or ears were turning white we knew we were beginning to freeze."—Kansas City Star.