



"Seff—Seff—my Seffy. No—not exactly—not to say sick. I like him so—he's all I got—and it's some thing wrong with him. He can't live long this way. Ebery night he's down by the Poison spring—wiss the witches—often all night. He's there now. I chust kem away—trying to cheer him up a little. Well, so good night."



Sally sobbed. The hands he had kissed before, he kissed again—in that fashion, you will remember, which must have survived from some cavalier ancestor.

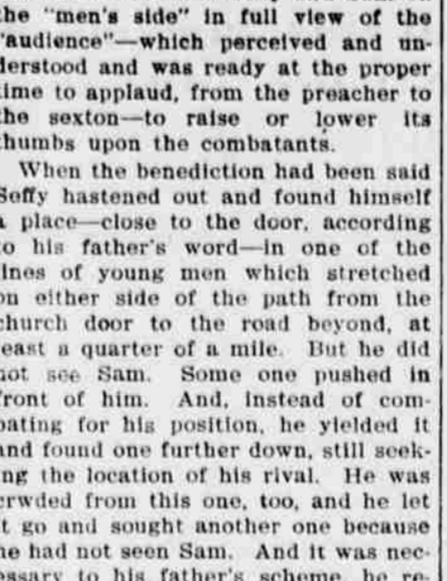
things in small lives. I shall tell you of their conversation as they came from the Poison spring, the radiance of the moon in Seffy's wan face, the very joy of the stary heavens in that of the girl—I must tell you what their talk was of. And I beg you again to remember that these small things, which you despise, were all they had there and then. I have wondered whether the wanton sacrifice of a child's toy when he is three is not as dreadful as the sacrifice of his love when he is 20. Do you know?

not yet arrived where he might put the awful question—there was a recognized period for this, and events had put it further and further off! Indeed, he shuddered when he thought of it—even then, after that understanding with Sally—and contemplated getting his father to do it for him.



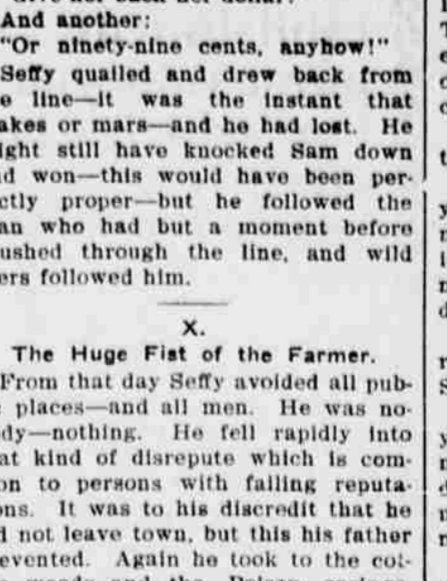
had never shown himself a master of material prowess. He demurred a bit at such a plunge into the arena. But there was no other way.

rivalry which he detested, and, it may as well be confessed—feared. It must, also, be explained that Sally's course in maintaining these two strings to her bow until the breaking moment was not only universally commended, but was the unswerving custom of the vicinage for girls so fortunate as to have two strings. It was held likely to force one or the other to the point—and this was the purpose of rustic coquetry! And Sally's coquetry was not only acknowledged; it was tolerated, and, I fear, encouraged.



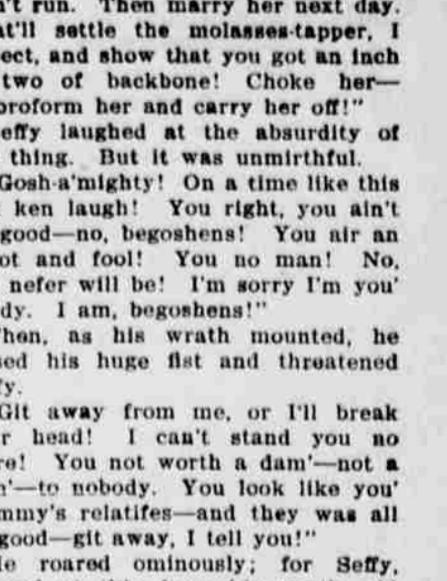
IX. It Was Seffy Who Was "Sacked." So they three went to church on a certain Sunday. Sally sat on the "women's side" and Seffy and Sam on the "men's side" in full view of the "audience"—which perceived and understood and was ready at the proper time to applaud, from the preacher to the sexton—to raise or lower its thumbs upon the combatants.

forgot him. He stepped noiselessly three paces toward Sally, crossed in front of Seffy and took her arm. There was a laugh almost ribald. Seffy could not see clearly—he could, least of all, think clearly—he did not know what had happened. He saw only the little white signal before him and blindly put out his arm.



X. The Huge Flat of the Farmer. From that day Seffy avoided all public places—and all men. He was nobody—nothing. He fell rapidly into that kind of disrepute which is common to persons with falling reputations. It was to his discredit that he did not leave town, but this his father prevented. Again he took to the cotton woods and the Poison springs, with, perhaps, the dim hope that Sally might again find him there, and that the peeping moon might again interfere on his behalf.

tapper if you want to see fun!" There was such real agony in the old man's voice that Seffy suffered, too.



—they ain't got noising else! You'll work all day and all night—and you'll haf no fun—they don't know no better—go!" "Yes," said Seffy, turning dumbly away.