

the doctor. Two people were coming, wanness of which, also, people began toward him. It was Sam and Sally, returning from their marriage.

By what he saw on old Baumgartner's face and hands, Sam was sobered. Both understood that they were approaching some tragedy.

"Who?" asked Sally, suddenly oblivious of Sam.

"Sam!" she turned upon her husband with command. "Bring the doc-

Sam went with satisfactory haste.

Who hurt him?" asked Sally, as if she were ready to slay him who did. "I. I killed him because he wouldn't marry you. You wouldn't marry htm! Oh, you devil!"

It was at that instant that the great change in Sally came. She leaped before him into the house and up to Seffy's room. When the old man slowly followed she was there-with eves bent upon Seffy's bloody, unconscious face. So she kept her eyes. She did not speak. And when the doctor came she was still there—as at first -unconscious as he, the doctor said.

He was not dead, and presently he breathed again. But his eyes remained closed, and, late that night, when he had drifted from unconsciousness into deep sleep, they put out the light and left him.

When they came again he had disappeared.

XI. When Spring Came.

That was a cold and lonely winter for the old man. The bay mare stood in the stable and whinnied for Seffy. The old house was full of harsh echoes. Its spirit seemed to have gone. Saffy's father knew now what a rare thing is joy-and what a joyous creature Seffy had been.

The ground was hard to till. And often he thought about what he had said of Seffy's mother. .

Then he would toil up the steep stair to the garret-he had become quite feeble-and take out of an old German chest a daguerreotype of her with Seffy in her arms. And sometimes he would cry over it until his beard was wet.

"God bless you, my little boy," he would sometimes say, "that you cared for her more than I did. You nefer called her no names.

"I didn't know I could be so mean to the dead-who don't deserfe it, and ean't talk back. And, God-a'mighty! If any one's to be called names, it's me!-not her nor-you, Seffy, nor you! For I expect I'm a murderer!"

And sometimes, when his loneliness was too hard to be borne, he would go out and sit for hours and talk to the old bay mare-about Seffy. He fancied she quite understood, and I do, too.

When the spring came he plowed alone. And this was hardest of all. To plow around and around his vast fields with no one to meet in the other furrow-no one to talk, to smile, to laugh to-then, when noon came, to sit under the shade of some tree redolent with memories of the pretty little boy, where he and Seffy had sat, from his childhood to his manhood, and eat the food which choked!

Oh, if he could only have laughedat himself, at Seffy, at the mare, at anybody or anything! If he could only have laughed!

And he knew that every animal on the place wondered and hungered for little Seffy and questioned him with pathetic eyes, while he, at first, guiltily kept silent-then tried to confess his shame to them.

"Yas," he told the mare, "I done it -I struck him-here, right here! In the face-while his eyes was looking in mine-pleading-and here was blood-and here and here-and dust in his hair-and his eyes was closed -and when I run home wiss him his legs dangled like he was dead. And he crawled away somewheres to die -I don't know why they don't come and hang me. I haf told 'em all that I killed him. But no one don't arrest

XII. The Kiss Like Seffy's.

One day he went up to the vinecovered house on the Hill of Delight, with a bundle of papers in his hand.

"See yere, Sally," he said senilely, "yere's you' papers. I gif up the guardeenship. You ken git another one if you not on age yit. I don't keer a durn who. I'm tired. If it wasn't for you-Seffy would be alife."

Sally drooped her head. 'Yes," she said, so humbly that he

relented a little. "I got to do it. I ain't no account no more. I ought to haf a guardeen myself. And people's making such a fuss-you ain't treated us right-no, you ain't! I guess I had better not be mixed in. They say that you married a drunkard, and killed-a manand got to be a drunkard yourself. But I know better 'bout one sing. I killed him. Yet they say that you married Sam chust to spite poor Seffy-and yet lofing Sef. Oh, Sef-Sef-why

didn't she tell you so!" He went on heedlessly till he knew that Sally was sobbing. He raised her face and looked into it curiously and saw for the first time that pathetic

'Sally," he said then, "you not well? "Quite well," said Sally.

Sally ?" "Oh, pappy," she pleaded breathlessly, "don't you turn away from me, too.

"Then you got trouble-trouble, too,



THEN YOU GOT THOUSELY - THOUSELY TON SHELY'S

I have no one but you! No. I have not treated you right. But, oh, life is so hard to me!"

"No," he said, smoothing her hair with his gnarled old hand. "I'fe had my eyes turned within. But I didn't know you had trouble. I heerd that Sam had took to hard drinkin' and I sought you didn't keer. You was so reckless-

"Yes," she sighed, "I am reckless! And-yes-I drink sometimes. But it is that way I can forget."

"I don't turn ag'in' no one in trouble, efen if they don't treat me right-and

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me, pappy! The suffering is mine!'

"Yas," he said, "yas-don't cry. But the suffering ain't all your'n."

"No," she said. "Not all-not all!" "But, Sally, if I take the papers back, you won't drink no more? It ain't nice-efen if you air the wife of a drunkard."

"No. If you will be my friend, I will try to be what I would have been as Seffy's wife!"

"It's a bargain-and I'm corry I spoke so harsh, Sally. Mebby, mebby -God knows!-we ken comfort one another. I-Sally-I need some one,

"Yes! Will you let me? I will have no friend but you!"

but you, Sally." "Will you let me kiss you?"

"Do you want to?" he cried tremu-

lously. "Yes," whispered the girl.

"Me? Sally, lem me kiss you!" She put up her lips almost solemnly -and with that their compact was

XIII.

sealed.

One Blow for That to Seffy. He took the papers home again, and was very gentle with her afterward. for the things which the world blamed in her. His was the only real kindness she knew. Her little canting world had no pity for her. But to her drunken husband, in spite of all, she was a loyal wife, and the old man liked her

the better for it. So it came to pass that they two, the bent old man and the girlish wife of the drunkard, separated more and more from the world and came more and more together. And often they were seen in the fields together and

walking along the roads arm in arm. With Sally's little fortune at command, Sam had gone rapidly to the bad. And Sally came to know what tears were, and that dreadful kind of waiting which falls to the lot of such women-the waiting for the fall of a footstep which makes one shudder yet rejoice.

They told her to get rid of him, but she shook her head and thought of the inscription in her wedding ring.

After a while it was the gentle old man who helped to make these vigils less intolerable—going away stealthily by the back door when Sam's unsteady step was heard at the front-an angel of light if ever there was one in plowman's jacket.

It fell grimly to his lot, too, to provide for Sam by diminishing the little farm he had longed and hoped for, acre by acre. There was no contention between them as to this. The young wife's wishes were his law.

"He married me for that," said Sally the first time, "and I let him marry me for that-just for spite. Only no one was spited but me-but me-well, he shall have it-all-all"-her voice, broke a little-"all but the-pasture-field-that -no one shall have but-you-or Seffy when I die."

Only once he interfered. Sam raised his hand to strike her and he in his place at the tuble. You shall be laid the drunkard at his feet with a my Seffy! And we'll wait for him toblow such as he had struck but once before in his life.

"I am her guardeen!" he cried as he struck. "By the Lord, I'm her guar-

prostrate brute. Then he stood up | sink you ken?" trembling before Sally.

"Forgif me," he begged. "But I couldn't help it. It done itself, Mebby -God-a'mighty only knows!-it was a chance to efen up for the other one. And yit it was a righteous blow-yas, it was a righteous blow!"

"Yes," she said. "You are the first that ever saw---'

It was too late to stop. And before it was done he knew that this was not a new experience to her, and that she suffered it-and was almost glad of it

"By the Lord," cried the old man, 'If he efer strikes you ag'in I'll kill him!

"No," said Sally softly. "Yas!" he insisted with some of his old violence.

"No," she repeated sadly. "Because it is all my fault-all the shame-the shame-because I-deserve it! And-'Thou shalt not kill!' You know we have tempers! And we have both used them!"

He shuddered and thought of the plowed field with Seffy lying there. "Good night!" he said with averted

"I didn't mean that, pappy-I didn't mean that you killed him. He's not dead. Pappy, kiss me-good night! And forgive me."

But this also made her dearer to him. And so, little by little, they drew closer and closer, until a certain happiness was his and a certain content hers. Occasionally they laughed. But this was not often. They were well satisfied to sit before the winter fire, she with an elbow on his knee, he with his rugged hands in her hair. And after a while she would ask him no more to kiss her good night-he did it as of right, and very beautifully, on her hair-so much like Seffy, that first dear kiss-that it made her sob -always.

"Just like Seffy!" she said the first time and cried, pushing him out of the door when he would have asked a

But he asked his question one day. It was whether she had loved Seffy. "Not till Seffy comes!" she cried. "I won't answer.'

"Sally," he said solemnly, "I killed my little boy. He is dead. I hurt him -I made him afeared of me-he dragged himself away to die, like wild animals that air hurt by men. So you will have to tell me.'

"No-no!" she begged. "He is not dead. And some day he will come back to us-you-

"Sally, you said 'us'?"

"Yes. Forgive me. I meant-you." "Did you mean me?"

"Yes-oh, yes!" "Cross your breast!"

She made this adjuration with a But when he had gone, she groveled

on the floor and cried:

"Us-us-us!"

XIV.

For Seffy's Sake. And so three-nearly four-years

passed and Sam was dead. "Pappy," she said afterward, "you have been very good to me!"

"And you to me-it's efen-say nossing more. "You have kept me from going

crazy, I think." "You haf kep' my ol' heart from breaking, I expect. Yas, I know, now, that there is such a sing as proke hearts," he averred.

"Pappy, I----

"Yes!" she said.

"What?" asked he. "I don't know what I'm going to do now. I got to work for my living, I expect. There is not enough left

"You'll nefer work for you' keep while I'fe got a dollar," said the old man. "I owe you that much forfor-She liked that. She was sitting on

a low stool at his feet, her elbow on his knee-her favorite attitude. She crowded a little closer.

"Pappy," she said presently, "let me come and keep your house," "Do you mean that?" asked the old man joyously.

"But why? That's hard work for a gal that's not used to it." "Oh, maybe I want to be where Seffy was. For-some day-some day-



he'll come back and I-want to be there-to ask his pardon." They were silent for a while and

then the old man said huskily: "You shall. You shall sleep in Seffy's bed. You shall look in his little cracked looking-glass. You shall set gether and we'll bose ast his pardon -when he comes—when he comes."

"May I ride his mare—and plow with her?" "You-you-you?" he questioned in

For a moment he gloated over the his ecstasy, "Ken you?-say-do you "Yes," she said very softly. "If you

will let me, I will be all and everywere soon to see it. thing Seffy was to you. I took him from you. Let me do my best to replace him. It is for that-that, only, some, now?" that I have cared. We shall rent this house and that will help-for I know you have been getting poor, too-and -and-if you will take it-I-I-want to give you-the pasture-field-for--and my handsoh, for Seffy's sake. Will you take She remembered how he had kissed it?" For he had demurred. "For Seffy's sake-just as you would take it kissed now-nor worth kissing. from him-and as he would give it to you-if he were all-here? I want to

much-but let me try." But he had caught that little slip of the tongue, and was dumb.

They sat silent by the fire for a long time then. Presently the old man rose and lifting her he said, with a smile such as she had never seen on his

be both son and daughter to you. Let

me be Seffy and myself too! It is

"Yas-for Seffy's sake-come!

Now! It was night. But he led her from her own house to his. And that night

she slept in Seffy's bed. One of Sally's duties was the nightly reading of the Farm Journal. And just now this paper, edited by a gentleman who knew nothing about farming-and by him edited well-was full of the great meeting of the National Farmers' League of the United States of America, which was in session at

"By far the most intelligent and interesting paper of the session, thus far," Sally read one night, "was that on 'The Proper Succession of Crops in Maryland' by the youthful president of the Kansas State league, Mr .-Sally rose suddenly and vanished to the kitchen where there was a light.

"What was it?" asked the old man when she returned. "I-I choked," said Sally quite

truthfully, "and went for a drink." "Yas-don't read no more. We'll find out about the succession to-morrow night. But what was the smart feller's name?"

She pretended to look for it, and when she pretended to have found it: "Mr.-S. P. Brown," she read.

"A Kansas man-about Maryland! But that night, after Seffy's father

was in bed, Sally wrote a pitiful letter -perhaps the first she had ever written: "Dear Seffy (it ran):

"Please come home. Come as soon as you get this. Your pappy wants you. He is old and sorry, so please come right away. "Sephenijah P. Baumgartner, Senior."

But the envelope was addressed to "Mr. S. P. Baumgartner, Jr., "President Kas. State League,

The post-mistress smiled indulgently as Sally handed in the letter the next "A long way off," she said.

"Yes," said Sally, fidgeting with her bonnet. "How soon do you think it will get there?

The post-mistress reflected. "About a week," she said then. "So long?" But, as a matter of fact, she had thought it would take longer. Kansas was a vague place in those days, and

a vast distance away. "Well," said the post-mistress comfortingly, "mebby not quite so long. But better not count on its getting there sooner. I'll give it a good start. I'll put it in the mail bag now."

"Thank you," said Sally. She watched her put it into the bag and then went dreaming home, and for all of the two weeks of waiting she was very happy-dreaming always Poor girl-she had made her life so unhappy that joy seemed divine. She was sure of Seffy. Sometimes she wondered with a blush and a start if he might not come himself in answer. She would not have been surprised to have him steal up behind her-that was his way, she remembered-and call out softly her name. So she went about almost on tiptoes so that she might hear him if he should. It was a little difficult to keep it from the inquisitive old man, who did not quite understand her sudden happiness. But

she did it. And, finally, the two weeks were up. She was quite sure Seffy would not waste a moment with his answer. And he might use that mysterious instrument, the telegraph, which she understood would not take more than an hour from Kansas. She supposed his message, even if he used the telegraph, would come to the post-office.

The ceremonial of a letter, with simple people, is as much a matter of concern as a treaty between two nations. And now, as she dressed herself in her best clothes to go to the post-office, she felt, somehow, as if she were to be in Seffy's personal presence, and must be as immaculate as always. She wondered how he would address her-forgetting that his answer must come to the one whose name she had signed. She had heard of various most dear head-lines to letters. I am afraid she blushed at all this. For, as she looked in the glass, she saw a face so radiant that she looked again to identify it.

So, all the more she dressed herself with the same care she would have taken were she going to him instead of to the post-office for his letter. She remembered what he had said about her hair, and she ventured to pull it about her face, much as it had been that night in the dark parlor. But at the thought of that the tears came slowly into her eyes. She had been very happy that night. It was all the happiness she had ever known, it seemed now. She dried her eyes and then she sat at the table where Seffy

had often sat, and looked again in his broken mirror. The radiance was quenched. Her face was pale and thin now. She thought of it quite as if he

"I wonder if he'll think me hand-She shook her head doubtfully at the face she saw in the glass. "No, I have no red cheeks no more-and my eyes are bigger-and my lips thinner-and my hair is paler

them, and put her head down and sobbed. They did not seem fit to be

But the post-mistress liked her better that way and so do I. For she had acquired a daintiness that was almost immaculate.

As soon as Sally came, the post-mistress smiled and shook her head. For she had understood what the letter contained quite as if she had seen it. And she had watched anxiously for the answer.

"Not yet," she said compassionately. Sally's legs weakened and she clutched at the little shelf before her. It took a moment to swallow the thing in her throat. Then she murmured:

"It's two weeks." "Yes. But he'd have to be pretty prompt to get it here by this time."

Sally had been sure of this promptness. It never occurred to her to



doubt. She would not have wasted a minute. She turned hopelessly away. "Perhaps to-morrow!" said the kind

post-mistress. Sally veered, smiling.

"You think so?" "Perhaps. One can never tell. Don't worry, dear. You see the address was very vague and it may be some time before they find him."

"You don't think it is too late?" "I hope not, dear."

She had not thought of that before. She had fancied him waiting for some such recall. But, of course, he had formed other ties-he would be glad to forget her. He might be married! Of course he was! Otherwise he could not be a president!

"I guess it's too late," she said

again. "I would not think that. The address was very vague. But, after you were gone, I took the precaution to put a return address on the envelope, and if he does not get it, it will come back; but that will take some little

time. There was nothing the next day nor the next, nor for the my ward that she went to the post-office. She was no longer dressed up for the trip, and she was glad now she had not told his father.

For a while she had to lock herself in her room when the desire came on her to go to the post-office. And then she remained away three days, then a week, and then the post-mistress admitted that the letter had had time to be returned. She must not give up though. Strange things happen, sometimes, with letters.

The letter had been returned, the post-mistress had it then. But she pityingly thought it best that Sally should wait for it still, while she tried to send it back to him.

Otherwise it was very much as Sally had planned and hoped, save that she was a bit sadder. She kept Seffy's father's house, as, perhaps, no house was ever kept before. She had not been famous for the keeping of her own house in the days of her coquetteship. Her grandmother had attended to this-and then a maid who interpreted her faultlessly. But now her own hands did all-and did it with love. And she did replace Seffy-and more. For she plowed, and, after a brief apprenticeship, no one did it better. The bay mare was as kind to Sally as she had been to Seffy. Nothing in his life had ever been so sweet to the old man as those rests when they met. And no food was ever so piquant as that eaten under the trees

at their nooning. Sally still went to the post-office, and the post-mistress still had her letter where she could have put her hand hand upon it, though she mercifully

concealed this. But there was no hope. Not a word of confidence had passed between Sally and the kind post-mistress, but each knew that the other understood quite as if their confidence was complete. So that it was as if they spoke of an old matter when Sally said, one

"Yes-I guess it's too late. He's

married. "I wouldn't think so, if I were you, till I heard from him," said the compassionate woman behind the counter. "I thought so once. He went to war. I heard that he was killed. I married another man-just-oh, just because! Then he came back. I have always been sorry."

Something filled the speaker's eyes -and Sally, with the dumb intuition of the primitive nature, stood there a long time and said only, "Thank

But after that hope rose and lived again. That night the post-mistress re-

ceived, from Washington, the address of the Kansas State League of Farmers' clubs, and put it on the face of the returned letter and sent it forth again.

Shall Seffy Enter at This Cue?

Winter had come again-the fifth one. They sat together in the great hearth of the kitchen, in their characteristic attitude when before a fire. The hickory logs sputtered savagely, but sent out to them, nevertheless, a grateful warmth. Their faces and bodies glowed in the fervor of it. And there is nothing like this to put one at peace with all the world.

"Sally," said the old man, "this is nice."

"Very nice," agreed Sally. But also there is nothing like this to send one's memory backward. And this it was doing for both of them.

"Eferybody don't haf no such fire to-night." And the everybody he thought of as he sighed was-Seffy. "No, not everybody," sighed Sally,

propping her head upon his knee. "Sally-who do you mean by efery body?" "Just one person," admitted Sally,

"the same one you mean."

"Yas," said Seffy's father very softly, and then they were silent.

"Mebby some's got no homes-and out freezing to-night," the old man said presently.

"I hope not," said Sally. "We could take them in here if we knew where they are-couldn't we, pappy?"

But that last note was the one which dams up tears. "Yas-if we knowed where they air! My God-if we chust knowed where they air! Sally, don't you nefer turn no

ter's night. You don't know who it might be!" "I'll never turn any one away from the door!" said Sally with emotion.

one away from the door on a cold win-

"That's right, Sally. Some's dead. I'd rather be dead than haf no home." 'And I," agreed Sally.

"Nor no friends." Sally nodded. "Sally, how long is it sence you was married?

"More than four years-nearly five, pappy. "My! but sings is changed!" said the old man. "Efen the sun don't

seem so bright no more." "Yes, things are changed," said the

"Yit it must be chust an idee. Why, the Bible says that summer and winter shall not change tell eferysing come to pass-eferysing-eferysing-" his voice broke. "Yit-yit-yit it's one sing ain't come to pass and it seems like it's nefer going to. It's better sence you come. But yit the house is damp-and shifery,"-he shivered himself-"and empty-like it was a fu neral about all the time. Yit it's no one dead-no one's dead-he's not dead-chust gone. You said so-you said it first! And some day he'll come back and we'll git on our knees and beg his pardon. But it's so long-oh. my God-so long! Oh, Seffy-Seffylittle Seffy-I got a pain in my breast about you! You was all I had. Come back to me-come back! I'm a ol man. And I'm sorry-sorry-and broke-broke down. But if you'll come oack-Sally, do you think he'll haf a

scar on his face?' Something stifled his utterance. The girl put out a soft hand to comfort

"Some day we shall know-see! Be brave!"

you nefer struck no one right in the face-when they was looking up at you-in that pleading kind of a way!" She said pitcously, "No." "Then you don't know nossing about it! Oh, my God! if you'd had it before

"Yas-yas-that's easy to say. But

you for more than four years-like a picture-morning and efening-day and night-eferywheres! The blood on him-and the bed and me!" "Pappy, I have done more-I have hurt him worse than you did-I broke -his heart!" whispered the girl. "Oh, 1 should have thought-there was no

were here now-They sat silent then until the old man said: "Ah well! Come, Sally, it's bedtime."

one like him-but I let him go. If he

"Yes." This meant that it was time for their prayer, which they always said in each other's arms, there, before the great fire. So Sally slipped to the floor, and they folded their hands each in the other. And, after "Our Father" was done, came this-rude, simple, but not less a prayer; for in the five years of Seffy's absence it had passed into

a formula.

"God, find Seffy, wherefer he may be, for thou seest all the world, and put it into his heart to come back to those who have repented these many years; make him merciful to the old and the evil-tempered, and yet, if this be not in thy infinite purposes, O God, we bend our heads in submission, for it is thy punishment for our sin; but send some word or sign, that our hearts may be comforted, and thy will be done-Amen!

And while this was being prayed 1 face came to the window in answera hand brushed away the snow that the eyes might see better. And then a head, crowned with pale hair, was uncovered-reverently.

Sally looked up. Something as irresistible as a magnet drew her eyes to that face in the window. As they got up the old man saw

Sally's white face and staring eyes.

"Sally," he said, "you look like you'd seen a ghost!" There was a knock on the outer

"Bring him in, whoefer he is, Sally and keep him tell he's got hungry nd