

"Lish Beadle."

"Pap! pap! them preacher boys is sing'n agin," came from the throats of Lish Beadle's quintette of girls as they rushed pell-mell into the shanty. "They's up on the street corner, front of Dan's s'loon," said the eldest, a girl of eleven years. "They's sing'n the same song what you said they singed last night, 'bout 'out on the desert sad and forsaken.'" "You must take us papa," chimed the five voices, "you know you said you would."

Lish took his chin out of his hands, and his elbows off of his knees. Then he got up from the soap box where he had been sitting while his wife was parching corn for the supper coffee. "It must be nigh sev'n o'clock then, if it's them a sing'n," said Lish as he put his head out of the door and listened. "It's them," he announced in a moment, and then turned to his wife, and said: "I s'pose supper ain't quite ready, Mag, so's I guess I'll take the young 'uns up 'fore the boys git through sing'n."

"Well, go if y'u want 'o" said the wife, "but y'u needn't think I'm goin' to keep supper wait'n for you."

Lish seemed not to notice the sharpness of his wife's words, but reached for his slouch hat, lifted the youngest child to his shoulder, took the next oldest by the hand and started off. The two older girls skipped on ahead, while the "middle un," as Lish called her, followed behind.

"I don't care if Lish is kind and love'n to the children and never says a word back," said the wife as she turned the corn into a chipped, yellow bowl, and seized a potato masher that Lish had recently whittled from ash. She ground the kernels of corn savagely. "Lish Beadle hain't one speck of git up about him. If he had we would'nt have to be usin' parched corn and old yellow dishes. If we had enough yellow dishes I'd be glad, but this is the only one we've got in the house, the rest is tin. And here is this old board table, with its rickety legs, it ain't seed a tablecloth for two years, not even an oil one."

Every board and leg of the table twisted and creaked, as it reeled about under the vigorous punching that Mrs. Beadle gave the corn. She turned from the table to the stove and grabbed the oven door. Off it came.

"There! it ain't any hinges now!" exclaimed Mrs. Beadle, as she thrust her hand into the oven and pulled out an old dripping pan full of coarse corn bread. "But I guess its still in keepin' with the yellow dish and the rickety table and the soap box. I s'pose when Lish sees the oven door broke off he'll say, 'Well Mag, the stove is gettin' kind a broke up, ain't it? Kin y'u get along a while longer with it, Mag?—just as he did last week when I set on a kittle of water and smashed the top in. A while longer! I wonder what he thinks I'll do when 'a while longer's up? He ain't done a blessed thing this live-long summer, but sit on that soap box and whittle out tater smashers and roll-in' pins. 'A while longer' 'll last till winter comes. Then we'll have to pack off to the poor house. That's what's comin' to, sure's I'm Mag Beadle."

"Where's yer pap?" asked Mrs. Beadle of the oldest girl as she came in at the door half an hour later, followed by her four sisters. "He's gone to the Methodist church," she replied, and added, as she walked up to the table and picked up a piece of cold corn bread: "Can we have some supper?" "What 'd he go to the church fer? How long's he s'pose I'm goin' to sit 'round here waitin' fer him to come and eat?"

"Pap said fer us to come home an' tell y'u that y'u ned'nt keep nothin' warm fer him. The meet'n's just fer men; else we'd a gone."

"Well, eat yer supper, and then clear up the table," said Mrs. Beadle, as she got her hat and put it on her head, this time without remarking "it's the same one I married Lish in." She went out into the back yard, picked up the axe and began to hack away at a chunk of knarled, knotty wood that represented the winter's supply of fuel.

"I s'pose Lish'll come home and talk to