

to talk; I wasn't no better than the rest of the men, not half so good, either. It don't do no good to think about that, though. It'll only make me think about her, and I don't want ter do that, and I can't help it if I git started."

So to shut out the thought of his wife's pretty face and sparkling black eyes, Peachy locked out through the semi-darkness past the barn to the wheat fields, where he had worked so hard for the past two weeks. Peachy was one of the temporary men that had been hired for the harvest, and when that was over he would have to move on, he knew not where. A thought of this came to him as he looked at the fields lighted and shadowed by the rising moon. "I don't need to think of tomorrow," he said, "I kin take keer of myself."

Thus Peachy tried to shut out the future and the past, and to think only of the present. It was not an easy thing for him to do, for the moonlight reminded him of her, and she belonged to his past. "It was just like this the first night I ever seen her," he thought, and then flashed up suddenly, "I won't think about her," he cried, "I won't, I won't—but I can't help it," and his voice ended in a quiver of despair.

He listened intently to the sound of the crickets around him in the grass and of the frogs in the slough. He looked at the stars dimmed by the moonlight, and the shadows on the hills getting every moment shorter and more distinct. He followed out slowly the long black line of brush that marked the slough. But he knew all the time that he was thinking of her. The sound of her voice shut out all other sounds. Her eyes shown between him and the stars. Her face was in the shadows, growing like them more distinct as he gazed. He tried to listen to the drowsy hum of the voices at the other corner of the house, but he could think of no one but the wife that he had left. He finally abandoned the struggle and gave himself completely to thoughts of his wife, though the thoughts brought him as much pain as pleasure. For mingled with his memory of

her was the knowledge that he had not treated her right, though she had been his wife and he had loved her.

He thought how frightened and trembling she had been when he had told her of his love. He remembered how very pretty she had been on their wedding day, and how sweet and good-natured she had been afterwards sometimes. But he remembered too that sometimes she had not been so good-natured. He cowered now at the thought of her terrible anger the night when he had come home drunk for the first time in their married life. The first time but not the last time, for there were many such evenings after that. His wife had been first angry, then tearful, and last, he remembered her best as she had been then, bitter and scornful. He could stand her anger, for she was beautiful when she was angry. He became in time accustomed to her tears. But her scorn had raised in him a tempest of hatred, and he had left her, once to return after three miserable days, again for good, he told himself, for he never could go back now; she would not look at him if he did.

"I ortn't to have left her," he said. "She didn't have nothin' to go on except the farm and that was mortgaged. But I wasn't no help to her, land knows. I was a sight more of a hindrance than a help. I don't blame her if she don't keer for me any longer. She's glad I'm gone, maybe. Anyway she used to keer for me, she used to—I don't keer, I won't go back. She ortn't to have been so proud. Maybe I'd have quit drinkin' and we would have been happy like other folks."

Peachy picked up his cob pipe and began sullenly to whittle again. But suddenly he threw it from him and bowed his face on his knees. "There ain't nobody else in the world to me," he said with a sob. "I don't keer for nobody and nobody don't keer for me. I've got to go back. I've just got to go back. I'll beg of her on my knees for one little kiss and then—I'll kill myself. I don't keer. I can't live without her and I can't quit drinkin'. I've tried and I know."