

ed. "Now I can go ahead with a good conscience. Well, I've been up to your wife's. Jim, there's nothing doing there. She won't take you."

Jim's face fell several inches. The other resumed.

"But, Jim, I guess she loves you, only she can't find a way to go back on her word. So we've got to use stratagems—see? If you can't go in at the front door you've got to go in the back."

"But she slammed the back door in my face," frowned Jim.

"Now take it easy," his friend counselled him. "Tomorrow morning we'll find a way." And with this Jim Searles was forced to be content.

The sound of hammering awakened him the next morning. Slipping on his clothes, he went into the smithy, to find Joe Turner putting the last nails into a huge packing case which stood on his cart, the horse being already harnessed. On one corner was a label bearing the words:

"ABIGAIL SMALE, Express Office, Norbory. To be kept till called for."

"What's that for, Joe?" inquired Jim in amazement.

"That's for you, me boy," answered the blacksmith. "Hop in."

"But you aren't going to send me to Abigail?" groaned Jim. "She wouldn't take me. Send me to Mrs. Searles."

"Now, see here, you thundering old fool," shouted the blacksmith. "Suppose I send you to your wife and she refuses you—what then? You're put out on the side-

walk. Whereas if Abby Smale don't take you in you'll have to stay three months at the express office. See?"

"Help me in, Joe," cried Jim, climbing into the wagon with alacrity, and a minute later the blacksmith was nailing on the slats of the lid. A few minutes later the cart drew up at the door of the express office.

"Package for Miss Smale, Mrs. Searles," called Joe.

"All right; take it into the office, Mr. Turner," answered the lady; and Joe, with many gruntings and bangings which called forth s m o t h e r e d ejaculations from his freight, carried the package into a dark corner.

"Now you keep still until the proper times comes, Jim," he exhorted, and, re-entering his cart, whipped up the horse and drove away.

As soon as he was gone Mrs. Searles went over to the case and looked at the label. She tried to lift it, but it was too heavy for her. Her husband, within, crouching like a frog, with fingers gripping the slats, hardly, dared breathe.

"That looks like Joe Turner's writing," he heard his wife say. "Full of old iron, I guess. Some trick of Joe's. He never did like Abby, and I guess I don't either, after the way she tried to set me against Jim."

Jim heard her sob as she turned away. His heart leaped up. His wife cared for him! If she would trust him again he would never touch another drop of liquor in all