

AN HUMBLE HERO

BY THOMAS P. MONTFORT

COPYRIGHT, 1911, BY THOMAS P. MONTFORT

CHAPTER XIV.
THE SECRET OUT.

It is difficult for two people to keep a secret, much less a half dozen.

When Pap Sampson advised the men at Hicks' that night that it would be better for no one to mention to Sim Banks a word about the meeting between Melvin and Louisa, they all agreed with him, and each of them promised not only the others, but himself as well, that he'd abide by that advice, and every man there kept that promise most sacredly.

Yet, for all that, the information they were guarding from Sim reached him in the course of time, as they might have foreseen that it would.

Sam Morgan at an unguarded moment told his wife all about it, but was careful to caution her to mention it to no one. She carried the secret safely in her bosom for a day or two; then, finding it too much of a burden to any longer bear alone, concluded to share it with her very nearest and dearest friend, Mrs. Mann, not forgetting to caution her against breathing a word of it to another living soul.

Mrs. Mann, less scrupulous than her neighbor or her husband, concluded to Sim, did not hesitate to reveal to him the whole story. She so thoroughly despised Louisa, for the simple reason that Sim loved her, that she was only too anxious to avail herself of such a propitious opportunity to injure her. Then Sim, the cruel wretch, had coolly scorned her love and humiliated her thereby in a manner that would be galling to the heart of any woman, and she was not sorry that it had fallen in her way to be able to mention to Sim the whole story.

She did not stop to consider what might be the result of her act. Meddling never did. The after consequences of gossip are something with which they are not concerned and of which they take no thought. It was so, in this instance at least, with Mrs. Mann. It never occurred to her to what serious lengths her act might lead, but it is doubtful whether she would have been able to control her tongue even if she had known.

It was only after an impatient delay of two or three days that she secured an opportunity to see Sim. Then she proceeded to pour into his ears the whole story as Sam Morgan had told it at the store. Sim listened quietly until she had finished, after which he calmly said:

"That is all. You say it is 'is'?"

"All?" she exclaimed wonderingly.

"My land, ain't it enough?"

"Is that all?" he repeated, with quiet firmness.

"It is," she replied.

"Now, do you want to hear what I have to say?" he asked.

Her heart gave a little joyful bound, and a thrill of pleasure ran through her. Sim spoke so quietly, so calmly, that she was sure he was not hurt by what she had told him. In the space of half a minute she had reasoned it out that it failed to hurt him because he no longer cared for his wife and had taken no interest in anything she did. The fact assured her that what he had to say would prove to be a renunciation of Louisa, and certainly nothing he could say would be more acceptable to her, except it were a declaration of love for herself. So softly and demurely she replied:

"If you care to tell me."

"Then listen," he said. "Every word you have told me is a lie, a willful lie."

Mrs. Mann staggered back as from the effect of a heavy blow. Sim's words, spoken so quietly, so positively, so unexpectedly, completely disconcerted her. In one breath they had dashed all her newly formed hopes and opened her eyes to the fact that the one great desire of her soul would never be realized. Sick at heart and pale with disappointment, she stared at Sim for a full minute in painful silence.

But presently a change came over her, and the paleness of disappointment gave place to a flush of anger. With a passion that but few women know, she could have equally well fixed her eyes on Sim, with such an expression of deadly hatred as he had never seen in any human eyes before, she said:

"Sim Banks, you are a fool, a poor, pitiful, miserable fool, and I despise you with my whole heart and soul. I despise you as I despise the meanest snake that ever crawled the breath of life or crawled in the dust. I hate you! I hate you!"

Ordinarily Sim would have been astonished at this sudden and vehement outburst, but at that moment he was not in a state of mind to be astonished at anything. With a wan, weary smile, he said:

"That's a different tune, Mrs. Mann, to what you sang that night up there when you told 'bout lovin' me."

"What if it is?" she snapped viciously.

"Oh, nothing. It don't make no difference to me what kind of tune you sing, nary a particle on earth. I'd just as lief you'd sing this kind as the other, as I don't know if I wouldn't liefer. But seems like you've changed a heap."

"If you love me, is it any sign 'cause a body's a fool once they're gone to allus be a fool? An I was a fool then, Sim Banks, a plumb downright idiot fool. If I hadn't 'a' been, I'd never 'a' thought that I loved the likes of such a miserable thing as you. Lord, you make me plumb sick with your fool eling to Louesey's skirts when you dole her very best to kick you off. You ain't got as much sense nor as much backbone as a worm."

"A dash of anger swept over Sim.

"Mary Mann," he said, with some spirit, "what I do is my own business, as long as I don't step on your corns you ain't got no cause to equal. No matter what you say, nor how you does, it ain't takin' no bide off of your back, as I kin see, so I reckon you might just as well save your breath for some other purpose."

"Humph! I reckon you mean to say that it's none of my business."

"I do, Mrs. Mann; I mean just that exactly."

"Waal, mebbe it ain't my business; but for all that, Sim Banks, I'm bound to say that you're a fool an' that everybody knows you are."

"Waal, if I am it's the Lord's doin's. He made me that way, an' I can't help it. If you got no quarrel to make about it, you better go on to

that night he showed the circular to those three men in his store and asked their opinion on it. After reading, it over carefully they all agreed, with one accord, that Hicks was right in his view and that Shelton and Melvin were certainly one and the same.

"That," Pap Sampson said, with an air of clear conviction, "is as plain as the ears on a mule. That ain't a shadow of doubt in my mind on that score. But what I'm pestered 'bout is what we ought to do next. That's the p'int I'd like for some of you to make clear to me."

They all exchanged an inquiring glance, but no one spoke. It was evident that none of them had any definite ideas as to what would be the proper course for them to pursue. When the pause had begun to grow awkward, Jason Roberts broke it by remarking irreverently:

"Right putty name, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

ing about the country, and they wanted to get to Turner's before he left. But in Sam's case there was an interruption that caused him a few minutes' delay. He was just in the act of mounting his horse to start when Sim Banks walked up.

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam said.

"Howdy, Sam," Sim returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"

Sim hesitated for an instant. Then he spoke slowly, his voice faltering and his eyes fixed eagerly on the other's face.

"I believe it's a lie," he began, "ever word of it a plumb p'int blank lie, but Mary Mann swears it's so, an she says 'Howdy, Sim?' Sam said."

"Howdy, Sim?" Sam returned. "Fix in to go some place?"

"Just got in in the country a little piece. Fine mornin, ain't it?"

"Yes, you in much of a hurry?"

"Right smart. Why?"

"Just wanted to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"I've got time to listen, I guess. What is it?"



"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don't you, Sam?"

"Pears like he'd kind of be foolin' 'way his time," Sam replied cautiously.

"But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"That's so, I guess I ain't. I meant to, but it plumb slipped my mind. But I reckon that's his own business, an' as long as he's satisfied we ain't no longer to kick up no fuss. But you ain't told us nothin' 'bout what he is."

"We have a little private business with you."

"Tiddy, it ain't that what I want, I'd like for you to tell me."

"I dunno, Jonathan, but it don't seem possible no sich good fortun' as that can happen to you."

Sam and Jason rode up to the yard fence and stopped. Turner, in a state of wild excitement, hurried out to meet them.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he called. "What is the matter with you? How you boys a-comin' on?"

"Sorter mornin', Sam replied. "How's you an' Tiddy a-makin' out?"

"Ah, peart as two yearlin crickets, Sam, yes, sir-ee! Jest as spry as a couple of grasshoppers. Say, I bet I know what fetched you over yere this mornin, Sam."

"You reckon?"

"Lord a-massy, yes."

"What?"

"Why, you're jest goin' to an take me, where you an' an haul me off down that to the county seat to set on to a jury. Ain't that so?"

"Not this time, Mr. Turner."

Jonathan's face fell. Sam's words were a cruel disappointment, a disappointment that was fully appreciated by every one who has seen the fondest hope of his life suddenly blasted and in an effort to cheer the old man said:

"You're time'll come yit, Uncle Jonathan. Yes, sir. Them fellers down that ain't goin' to be able to get on 't'out you much longer, an 'bout the first thing you know they'll be sendin' you here after you. Lord, you'll be settin' on to a jury as big as you please 'fore you get to the county seat."

Though Turner felt his disappointment keenly, he did not allow it to get the better of his curiosity. With a sigh of resignation he said:

"Waal, trials an' tribulations will come to all in this life, so thar ain't no use a-grievin'. But if you ain't come over yere to get me to set on to a jury I can't figger out what you did come for."

"We came to see Mr. Melvin," Sam replied.

"All thoughts of the jury and the lost glory of 'settin' on to' it passed from Turner like a flash.

"Lord a-massy," he cried excitedly, "have you uns over thar to Beckett's that feller?"

"I ain't said nothin' 'bout findin' out where he is, I've been holdin' it in my mind. You wouldn't be a-comin' out here to see him, would you?"

"Oh, we have a little private business with him. Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't. What kind of private business can you have with that feller, Sam Morgan, I'd like to know?"

"Can you tell me what he's doin'?"

"To be shore, but my land, I can't figger out no way how you'd come to have no business with him. Reckon it ain't nothin' 'bout them minerals he says he's a-smellin' round yere for, is it?"

"Not exactly."

"I loved shore it couldn't be, 'cause you all know thar ain't nothin' in all this blame section to make a body rich, but I know you're huntin' for blame well thar ain't nothin' in the ground no mineral nohow. You an' Jason know that as well as I do, don