

# Up Eel River

*Margaret Prescott Montague*

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# UP EEL RIVER

*By*

*Margaret Prescott Montague*



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*Martha Bensley Bruère*

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## TO WEST VIRGINIA

*To its flowing mountains and golden valleys; to its tall trees, hickory, white oak, and pine; to its laurel and rhododendron, wild ginger, arbutus, and hepaticas, and to its forest streams; to its beneficent days, Indian summer in November, and corn-planting weather in May; to all its gay company of wild life, rabbits, squirrels, and ground-hogs, birds and butterflies, crickets and katydids; and to its mountaineers, with love for their expressive and beautiful vernacular, and delight in their whimsical humor; to all these aspects of West Virginia, these stories of "Tony Beaver," that distinguished son of the State, who has his log camp "up Eel River," are affectionately dedicated, hoping that they may serve to portray, however inadequately, that spirit of laughter and extravagance which is at the heart of nature and human nature, and may at the same time voice the author's gratitude to her native State.*

## PREFACE

All over the United States there appears the legend of a super-lumberman who performs impossible feats. This legend is said to be the only genuine bit of folklore which America has as yet produced. In New England and the North West this mythical character appears under the name of "Paul Bunyan," and as "Paul" has figured in several books, and even been honored in a poem, "Paul's Wife," by Robert Frost. The present writer stumbled upon the same myth among the lumbermen of West Virginia, only in this locality the hero is known as "Tony Beaver," and has his lumber camp "Up Eel River." There is no real Eel River in West Virginia, and in local fantasy it is the place where all the impossible things happen, so that here if one doubts some statement it is not necessary to apply to it the short and ugly word, but merely to say with a shrug, "Aw, that must er happened up Eel River." I may remark also in passing that "Eel River" has sometimes been used as a boundary mark for locating fictitious coal lands in West Virginia, which were sold to trusting capitalists of the North. Therefore let me warn any would-be purchaser to beware of property in West Virginia in any way connected with "Eel River," for however respectable a river of that name may be in other parts of the country, with us it is as slippery in its habits as the snake-like fish for which it is named.

Until I began taking liberties with him, "Tony Beaver," as far as I know, had never figured in print, his exploits merely being passed from mouth to mouth—losing nothing, one may be sure, between mouths; for which reason it would seem that stories about him should not be dressed up in formal English, but should be appareled rather in the free and easy speech of Tony's own mountains. Moreover, I agree with Mr. George Moore that country speech is more alive, and therefore more beautiful and effective than city speech, and that localities should treasure their own vernacular.

Thanks are due to *The Atlantic Monthly* for permission to reprint four of these stories, and to *The Forum* for the same courtesy in regard to "Big Music" and "Hog's Eye and Human." I am also indebted to Mr. James Stephens for information in regard to "Paul Bunyan," and to Mr. Edward O'Reilly for having introduced me to "Pecos Bill." Lastly, and most especially, I am grateful to Messrs. W. B. Hines, Henry Casto, and Jack Ridgeway, for having given me news of Eel River and Tony Beaver.

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# UP EEL RIVER

## CHAPTER I

### FROM SOMEWHERE'S TO NOWHERE'S

Howdy, strangers, I sure am pleased to meet you-all. My name's Jerry Dan Doolittle, but up Eel River in Tony Beaver's log camp, they all calls me Truth-Teller. Sure, make yerself at home, step right inside the kivers, set a spell, and take a chaw of this book.

Mebbe you think that's a right funny way to commence, but I ain't never written no book afore, and it looks like to me that this tale, what's got me and Tony Beaver in it, along with Preacher Moses Mutters, and his ole partner, Ain't-That-So, Big Henry, and Jack Sullivan and all the tother hands from the Eel River crew—not to say nothing of Miss Betsy Beaver, and that little boy, what's sech a great buddy of Tony's—is going to pass out into the world, travel around, and meet up with a heap of folks we don't even know, so me and the tother hands is aiming to be polite and make any feller that steps inside these kivers feel at home right from the jump. Yes, *sure!* Help yerself to these tales! Take one of 'em—take two of 'em—Why, take darned nigh *all* of 'em if you crave to.

Now then, seeing as we're kind of acquainted, I'll git on with the job.

Well, of course I don't have to tell none of you-all that if you go into the tall timbers, you'll sure run up erginst some tall tales, and jest about the tallest tales a person kin find anywheres air right here in West Virginia about Tony Beaver and that big log camp of hisn up Eel River. Why, some of them tales is so tall that if you was to up-end 'em they'd look right over the tops of the white oak trees—a fact I'm telling you.

Yes, sir! You'll hear every kinder tale about that Tony Beaver, but, if you want the truth about the feller, you'll jest have to come to me, for I'm the onliest hand in all these woods what's ever been up Eel River and met Tony right face to face, and Tony hissself handed me out a trick for telling the truth from the tother thing. More'n that he named me the Truth-Teller, and ast me please to write a kind of a history of all his big doings—and that's what I'm aiming at right this minute.

It sure was funny how I happened to go up Eel River. The thing come to pass sorter by chance, but more by me allus being sech a great hand to git to the truth of a thing—Yes, sirs! I'm jest a *hog* for truth.

Course I'd heard every kinder tale about Tony Beaver and all the fellers in his crew, but I jest passed 'em all up as nothing in this world but a whole

parcel of lies, twill one time when ole man Wiley and me was out working in the woods together. Mebbe you know that ole feller? He's got a great bush of whiskers, and his years is so large, and sets out so from his head, that folks 'lows he needn't to mind sleeping out nights, for he kin jest lay down on one year, and kiver up with the tother—yes, that's the feller I mean. Well, him and me was out in the woods one day, like I said. We'd jest felled a right tough ole hickory, and when the thing was down, jest to show it who's boss, ole man Wiley spits on his hands and jumps acrost the stump of the thing. Then he sets down on the trunk, and bites him off a great chaw of terbacker—and if you'll notice, strangers—I mean you-all what's reading this book—the bigger the chaw, the bigger the lie—and says, “Tony Beaver, now, he kin jump acrost Eel River and back ergin, and never tech ground on the tother side. And more'n that he's got him a yoke of steers up yonder in his camp, so big it takes a crow a week to fly betwixt the horns of one of 'em.”

“Yes, that sounds jest like the Gospel truth to me,” I says right sarcastic.

“'Tis the truth, Jerry Dan! Take it or leave it!” says the ole feller, kinder miffed.

“I'll take the truth, and leave the tother thing,” I says, not wanting to stir him up too much, seeing's as he ain't so very old and has got him a right stout fist at the end of his arm.

“You'll take the whole of it then,” the ole feller says, squinting down his nose and gitting ready for another big one. “It was up Eel River too, Tony growed him that powerful big watermelon, what was so large it tuck the whole of a freight flat to ride it down the river. Tony he had the hands to load it onto the flat, and then he clomb up atop of it, and the train started out. But it's mighty rough up Eel River, the grades is steep, and the railroad makes a heap of hairpin bends, and being a watermelon, I reckon that melon jest natcherly tuck to the water. Anyhow, that ole freight was hitting the rails jest lickety split on a down grade, and Tony was setting up a-straddle of his melon, with the dust and cinders flying through his hair, the wind whistling in his years, and all the tother hands swinging onto the back cars for dear life, when whoo—*pee!* the freight hit a sudden bend, and dogged if it didn't switch Tony and the melon both right off the flat, down the bank, and into Eel River itself!

“Well, sirs! The hands they was all skeered to death for fear pore Tony'd be drowned: but when they got the train checked up, and run back to look, *hold and below!* The melon had done busted all to pieces, and here come Tony riding down the river on one of its seeds jest like he was riding a saw-log. He hollers to the tothers to get 'em seeds too, and come on jine the drive, and it wa'n't hardly no time 'fore the water it was right full of hands,

whooping and hollering, buck-jumping down the river on them black watermelon seeds, all in the wildest kind of a jamboree. It sure must've been somepen to see, and I know doggoned well it 'ud only be up Eel River you'd run across a melon with seeds *that* big, but you know the saying—

“*That's* the way they do  
In the Eel River crew!”

“Well!” I says, all fired up, “where in the H—” *Aw-oh!* Excuse me, strangers! I didn't go to let fly no kinder rough word like that—jest at the start too! “Where in the *heavens* is Eel River!” I says.

“That's it!” says the ole feller, which of course wa'n't saying nothing at all.

“All right,” I says. “I'll jest go on over to the schoolhouse, and hunt me up the place in a geography.”

“Aw no, Jerry Dan, you'll not locate Tony Beaver's Eel River in no school book!”

“Well, I'm a gonna locate it *somewhere*, and locate the truth of all these here tales at the same time!” I busts out.

“Haw! Haw! Haw! You'll never locate Eel River *somewheres!*” old man Wiley hollers out like I'd hit the biggest kinder joke—I had, but didn't know it. “If you do locate the place, mebbe you'll locate the truth, and mebbe you won't—but you'll not git there at all, lessen Tony sends that there path of hisn out for you.”

“Tony's path—what's that? I never heared nothing about him having a path afore,” I says.

“Well, spread yer years then, and I'll pour the tale into 'em,” says the ole feller. “That path now, it sure is a handy little trick! Tony he happened up on it all by chance one day when he was coming along through the woods. First off it looked to be jest a common enough little trail going about its business, not paying no 'tention to nobody, with ferns and moss hanging onto its edge, and little gray rocks poked up through its middle, but the minute Tony set foot on it, whoop—*ee!* the thing squirmed right out from under his feet and pitched him over in the bresh.

“‘Hey! Doggone you! What in the thunder air you up to!’ Tony bawls at it mighty mad, for where Tony Beaver sets his foot thare he aims to have it stay. With that he jumps back ergin on the path good and hard with both feet. But ergin she humped up and bucked him off. Well, sirs! Tony he set back in the bresh and studied that frisky little trick for quite a spell, and when he done that he seen it wa'n't struck down to the ground like most trails, but was kinder loose and free. So then he went to one end of it and ripping it

away from the ground, rolled it up mighty keerful and tuck it on back to camp, jest like it was, with the moss and ferns and little gray rocks swinging onto it. There he tamed the critter, and *now* whenever he wants a person to visit him up Eel River, all he has to do is to send out that there little path, and dogged if the thing won't fetch anybody into camp jest for all the world like a cat fetching in a mouse."

"Well, I sure did have to spread my years—large as they is—to take in *that tale!*" I says. "And how does a person git the word to Tony that he's wanting to see him?"

"Send it by a jay bird, Jerry Dan," says the ole feller, kinder laffing. With that he picks up his saw, and went moseying off to camp.

"Jay bird *nothing!*" I says out loud to myself kinder mad, and "*Jay! Jay!*" a blue jay says right back at me outer a sumac bush.

"Here, bird! Who you sassing? You git on back up Eel River where you belong, and tell yer boss I'm a-wanting to see him!" I says, and along with the words I throwed a rock at the critter.

The jay give a right funny flirt to his tail and flew off, and I didn't think nothing more of the thing, but *Great Day in the Morning!* It was jest that *very* evening when I was coming through the woods along 'bout sundown, that I run up on a little path laying out there on the ground, looking jest as innocent as you please, and like it wa'n't doing a thing in this world but warming up its back 'fore the sun went down. "Hey!" I says to myself. "This must be a short cut to camp I've never seen afore—b'lieve I'll take it!" I says.

With that, never thinking nothing, I steps out on the thing. *Well, sirs!* It had jest been a-laying there waiting for me! The minute I teched foot to it, it busted itself loose from the ground, and went a-t'aring and a-r'aring out through the woods like a black snake racer!

"*Aw my soul!* What's got you now, Jerry Dan!" I hollers out, flinging both arms right tight round the thing's neck, swinging on for all I was worth to keep from being bucked off and fatally busted.

"*Hole on! Hole on!* Jest—jest—jest—*wait* a second if you *please*, sir!" I bellers at the thing, so skeered my words was shaking all up and down, and the goose flesh was right stiff up the spine of my back.

But it never broke its stride, and yonder we went out through the woods, wriggling and wrastling, t'aring up the hills, sliding down the hollers, and diving acrost the cricks and little runs, with the water splashing up, the wind zooning in my years, and my logger boots, heavy as they is, stripped right offen my feet by the pace—a fact I'm telling you.

I shet up both eyes, and give up all for lost, and *splash!* We split a river wide open, and swee—eeeeesh! we went up the bank on the tother side. "Aw

my lands! I wished I'd said good-bye to my folks 'fore ever I tromped on this thing!" I says to myself.

The path had got itself going good by now, and when we hit the top of the next ridge, dogged if it didn't spread itself right out in the air and jest sail acrost to the next ridge, never teching ground in between. Strangers, I wouldn't like to tell you-all what a *turrible* feeling it give me in the stomick when the thing done that.

After that, it never bothered about the hollers no more, but jest went hop-skip, skip-hop, from ridge to ridge, for all the world like a young un hopping acrost a crick on stepping stones, with me swinging onto its neck and wishing I was mo' ready for a exchange of worlds. "Aw my soul! We're a-heading straight for the Atlantic ocean, an'—an'—an' *then what?*" I says, trying to keep the chatter outer my teeth. "Ho'!—Ho'!—Ho'!—*Hole on!*—hole on, brother! Wait! Wait! Jest please to wait a second! *Whoa! Whoa-up! Hoo-Haw! Gee! Back-a-leg!* Doggone it!" I says. "If I jest knowed whether the thing was a human or a critter, I'd know how to talk to it! Hole on, Mister—Mister—Mister *Man*, or whatever you call yerself, please to put on the brakes," I says jest as nice and polite as I knowed how. But the thing never checked up. "It don't seem to understand human talk, so it must be some kinder critter," I thinks. With that I commenced trying it with every kinder animal talk I could lay my tongue to. "*Sukey! Suke! Suke! Suke! S-o-o-o, gal! Back a leg!*" No, 'tain't a cow, I says, seeing as it never took no heed of that cow talk. "*Chickie! Chickee! Chickee! Duckie! Duck-ie!*" (No, 'tain't a fowl.) "*Pig! Pig! Pig! Pig-ee!*" (No, 'tain't a hawg.) "Well, then—*Here, Ponto! Here, Ponto! Here! Here! Here! He—re, Ponto! Good dog—ie! N—i—c—e ole feller!*" I tries at it, and I would of patted its head if it had of had a head to pat, and I could of spared a hand from holding on to pat with. "No, 'tain't a dawg," I says, seeings as Ponto didn't fetch it. "I guess, though, it's lucky it ain't," I thinks, "for if it had a-been, it mought of wagged its tail, and wagged me right into Kingdom Come! *My Soul!* That was a narrer escape!" I thinks. "I better try it with some animal that don't wag. Well, then—*Sheep! Sheep! She-e-e-e-pie! Shee-pie! Sheep!*" (No, 'tain't a sheep.) "*Mebbe it's a horse then. Kope Kope! K—o—p—e! Whee-ooo! Whee-ooo! Whif—Whif—Whew! Whif—*" I tries to whistle at it like you do to a horse, but we was going so fast the wind cut the whistle right off short in my throat, and nigh choked me to death. "Well *doggone* it, then it must be a mule!" I says, and I wouldn't like to tell you the words I busts out with then—Aw well! You know how a person talks at a mule! But it jest kep' right along skip-jumping from ridge to ridge, hop, hop, hop, and if it knowed mule talk it never let on like it did.

“Well, by the way it travels, it mought be a grasshopper,” I thinks. So I tries it with—

“Hoppy-grass, hoppy-grass,  
Gimme some molasses!”

Which was the onliest thing I’d ever heard of a person saying to a hop-grass. But that never fetched it neither. “Well, *dog my cats!*” I says. “It don’t ’pear to be human, critter, ner insec’, and if it’s a veg-a-table, then *Skat* me! if I know a word to say to it!”

Well, there now! Looked like jest by chance I hit the right kinder talk, for the minute I said “*Skat*” the thing fa’rly split the wind wide open going. “Well, darn me, if it ain’t a cat!” I says. “*Well, sirs! Puss! Puss! Puss! Kittie! Kittie! Kit! Nice* little pussie-cat! Whoa-up, kitty! Wh-o-o-a-a, pussie! N-I-C-E little kitty!” I says, making out like I liked cats, though I don’t.

But if it was more a cat critter ’an any other kind, me saying “*Skat*,” and “*dog my cats*” like that had got it mad, and *now* it wouldn’t check up for nothing, but jest kept clipping right along from ridge to ridge, with me laid out on its back, and thinking mighty pale with every jump, “There sure will be a strange face in Heaven to-night—and it’ll be yours, Jerry Dan!”

But by now as I looked down and seen all below winking by, it seemed like the whole world was jest about to bust itself wide open laffing. The rocks and trees and bushes ’peared to be laffing, and every varmint that run out to look as we went by, was carrying on the same way. Rabbits, squirrels, and groundhogs, they’d all run out to look, r’ar back on they behind legs, p’int, and wave they paws up wide, hollering out somepen, and *then* jest fa’rly fall over on the ground, kicking, and rolling over, and laffing, “Ho! Ho! Ho! Haw! Haw!” fit to bust theyselves wide open.

I didn’t know what it was all about—and yit some way I did too—but d’rectly seeing the critters all so tickled, commenced to git me tickled, skeered though I was. “Well, there’s somepen powerful funny going on, Jerry Dan,” I says to myself, “but looks like I jest can’t reach it with my funny bone.”

But the more I didn’t know what the thing was, seemed like the more tickled I got—Aw well, you-all know how ’tis, sometimes a joke you don’t know’ll git you more tickled ’an one you do. “Well ’tis funny I know, but dogged if I know what ’tis!” I says.

“Hey now, what’s the big laf?” I hollers down at the varminits.

They waves they paws up wide, and hollers back, “Yer traveling from—from—traveling—” but going by so fast I couldn’t ketch what they said.

A ole black crow flopping along 'side of us let out a great "Caw! Caw! Haw—Haw—Haw!"

"You black raskil! Quit Caw-Hawing at me, and tell me what's hit your funny bone!" I hollers at him.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Don't you know yer a-traveling from—from—Haw! Haw! From—traveling from—Haw! Haw! Haw!" He couldn't git the words out for laffing, and d'rectly we was outer ear-shot.

"Well, I *know* it's somepen funny if it'll make a crow laf," I says. But right that minute all the tickle was skeered outer me, and I tuck a fresh strangle holt on the path, for the thing scooted up the tallest ridge we'd hit yit, with the bresh and trees down below waving in the wind of it, the coons and squirrels, and varmints, rolling around all blowed about, still laffing and hollering, "Yer traveling from—from—Oh, Haw! Haw!" and jest at the top of the ridge the path flung itself out over a high cliff of rocks right into the air, and I never seen nothing no mo', but the sky overhead and a twinkle of earth below, all going by in a kind of a daze.

"Good-bye Jerry Dan—*pore* young feller!" I thinks, wishing my stomick was more used to this kinder riding, and hanging on to the path with all four arms and legs, and toe nails.

Well, I stayed with my pig, as the saying is, and in another pair of seconds, the path landed down somewheres, give a final buck-jump, and a squirm, and lef' me laying out flat on some kinder ground.

"Well, where in the thunder am I at now!" I thinks, setting up on the ground and looking about still in a kind of a maze. As I ketched my breath and looked, I seen log hands come a-running from every which way, all of 'em whooping and laffing, waving they arms out wide jest like the varmints, p'inting and hollering to one another, "Hey, look ayander! *Look!* Aw my soul, look what the path fetched in! Aw, Haw! Haw! Haw!"

I jined in too, whooping and laffing with the best of 'em, for I knowed it sure was comical, but still and all, I didn't know what it was.

"Haw! Haw! Welcome, stranger!" they gits out.

"Welcome, yerself," I says. "And—*excuse* me—Haw! Haw! Haw! Will you please to tell me what I'm a-laffing at, so's I kin laf sure 'nough?"

"Why you *big idgit!*" one of 'em bellers back all in a breath, "you're a-laffing 'cause you've traveled right from *Somewheres to Nowheres*, and *now yer at it!*"

"Well, dog my cats! *Er course* that's it! Why—course—course I knowed that was what I was doing all the time! Aw, Haw! Haw! Haw! Traveled from *Somewheres to Nowheres*, and *now* yer at it! Well that is comical sure! Traveled—*Somewheres—Nowheres—*an' now yer at it! Aw my jaws! My jaws!" I hollers out.

Well, sirs! That thing come nigh killing me, for I reckon I don't have to tell none of you-all that's reading this tale, that to travel from Somewheres to Nowheres is jest about the *beatenest* thing a person kin do. And if you don't b'lieve me, you jest travel that way onced yerself, and see if it don't come nigh putting your funny bone outer place. There's jest one thing funnier than *traveling* from Somewheres to Nowheres, and that's to git there—and *now* I'd done both, and the joke of it come nigh ruining my jaws. It's the truth they had a kind of a crick in 'em till a right smart time afterwards when we-all up Eel River hit the world's funny bone, and the big laf that time kinder put 'em back into place ergin—but I don't aim to tell you-all about *that* now.

“Well, well!” I says at last, sitting up on the ground, all wore out. “If I'm Nowheres, where am I?”

“Why, yer up Eel River——”

“Yer in Tony Beaver's log camp——”

“Tony's path fetched you in——”

“Tony Beaver——”

“Eel River——”

“Ain't that so!”

“Eerrr—erk! Errr—erk! Errrr—ROOOO!” They all bellers out in a jumble together.

“*Eel River!*” Well sure enough, there I was! I mighter knowed all the time I was heading for it, and I would've liked to laf some more, only that trip from Somewheres to Nowheres had jest laffed me dry. I looks around and yonder was all the hands from Tony Beaver's log camp I'd been hearing sech tales about, and never b'lieving they was true. There was Preacher Moses Mutters as solemn as a billy goat, and his ole buddy Ain't-That-So; there was the little fiddler, mighty wide looking betwixt the eyes, and kinder laffing to hisself like he knowed somepen funnier 'an he could lay his tongue to; and there was Big Henry and Jack Sullivan, what's the biggest kinder buddies, 'cept when they's fighting one another—which they 'most generally air: yes, sure 'nough! There they all was, and a heap more besides.

“Well, sirs!” I says looking all about with my mouth gapping open. “Here you all air sure 'nough, when all the time, I jest thought you was nothing in this world but a whole parcel of lies!”

“You thought we was *what?*——”

“What's that you say, stranger?” Big Henry and the Sullivan feller bawls out, dancing up to me and looking powerful dangerous.

“Excuse me! Excuse me, partners!” I says all in a hurry. “I was jest aiming to say I never thought none of you was so.”



“Aw yes, we’re so—leastways we’re so-so,” says Jack Sullivan, unrolling his fists.

“Hey now! Here’s Tony Beaver hisself! *He’ll* tell you whether we’re so or not!” Big Henry hollers.

Well, sirs! Believe me or not! There was the great Tony Beaver hisself coming moseying along with that little boy buddy of hisn sitting up on his shoulder mighty proud, his arm round Tony’s neck, looking like he owned the whole world, and then some.

Well now, I ain’t aiming to tell you-all jest what Tony Beaver looks like. He’s sech a great hero that mebbe it’s best jest to think in yer own heads what he looks like—thataway every feller kin think him up to suit hisself.

Well, he come swinging along with that kinder limber tread he’s got, more like some kinder wild varmint than a human, and “Hey! What’s all this about?” he hollers.

“Look a-here, Tony! Here’s a stranger what the path fetched in, saying as how he never knowed we was so,” Big Henry says, all worried up. “Stranger, shake hands with Mister Beaver,” he says.

“Welcome to Eel River, stranger!” Tony says mighty nice and friendly, and “Welcome, stranger!” the little boy up on his shoulder says right after him.

“Pleased to meet you, Mister Beaver! Pleased to meet you, sonny!” I says fetching out the best manners I had.

“I got your word all right, and sent the path out for you,” says Tony.

“Why, I didn’t send no word to you, Mister Beaver,” I says.

“Didn’t you send word by a blue jay you was wanting to see me?” he says, and “*Yes*, sure you did! Sure you sent word by the jay bird!” his little buddy says.

“Why, come to think of it, sure I did! Ain’t that so! But I never thought nothing in this world of it!” I says.

“Yes! Never-thought-nothing-of-it gits a heap of keerless young fellers like you into trouble!” Brother Moses Mutters, the preacher, bawls at me, clawing his fingers through his whiskers, and looking turrible scan’alized, and “Ain’t—that—so!” another ole feller sing-songs, dragging out his words jest thataway, mighty solemn and heavy, like he was dropping rocks down a well. I never did know what that ole brother’s name was. All the fellers jest called him “Ain’t-That-So,” ’count of him allus backing up the preacher with jest them words, no more, and no less.

“Errrr—*erk!* Errrr—*erk!* Errrr—ROOOOOO!” Another hand comes out all at onced, flopping his arms, and making out to crow like he’s a rooster. That sure did give me a great jump, but come to find out that was pretty nigh allus what that feller done. Ole Brother Mutters ’ud say somepen mighty

solemn; “Ain’t—that—so!” his old partner’d back him up, and, “Errrrr-*erk!* Errrrr—*erk!* Errrr—ROOOOOO!” the joky hand ’ud flop his arms and crow right after them solemn old buddies. Aw, I dunno why the feller done it! It was jest a kind of a way he had—but seemed like it *allus* made them two ole fellers mad.

“Tell the stranger we’re so, Tony—’fore I tell him with my fist!” Big Henry hollers, all fired up.

“Yes, sure we’re so, all right! But if the feller don’t know it, he’ll jest have to stay in camp a spell to find out how so we air,” says Tony. “Looks like that path tore you up some, stranger,” he says looking me all over, and seeing how all tousled to pieces I was. “But the hands’ll rig you out all right ergin.”

“Yes, *sure!* We fellers’ll fix you fine!” says the little buddy.

Well, sir! That there path what had fetched me in at sech a clip, had been laying off in the bresh, kinder dozing along, resting up after the trip, but the minute it heared Tony say “path,” it give a bound, and come a-romping and a-wriggling up to him, rolling over on the ground at his feet, humping itself up and rubbing round his legs, precisely like some kinder cat critter.

That was the first time I’d had a right good sight of the thing, for when I come in, I was too busy holding on and too skeered to look—and believe me! now I jest looked and looked at it with all the looks I had. It looked like a—Well, it looked like—like—Aw, you know! Like a—a—a—Well, now I come to study on it, be darned if I kin tell you-all jest what the thing did look like! But anyhow, it sure did make my eyes bulge to see it.

“*Look out! Look out, stranger!*” the little fiddler yells at me all of a sudden.

“Hey, what!” I says, giving a big jump.

“Hol’ yer eyes in place, or they’ll pop right outer yer head with looking!” he hollers back.

The little feller warned me jest in time, for it’s the truth, in another pair of seconds my eyes would’ve busted right outer my head.

That’s one thing I’ll jest take time right now to warn you strangers of—I mean you-all that’s reading this book. If you ever happen to go up Eel River, do pray mind and hole onto yer eyes, or you sure will lose ’em looking at what you’ll see up there. One time there was a right pitiful happening jest on account of that very thing. Whilst I was still up yonder in Tony’s camp, there was a young feller—but that’s some piece off yit, so I’ll come on back now to the beginning.

“Well, now you air here, what was you wanting to know?” Tony asks me, after I’d got my eyes settled back safe in my head again.

Well, what was it? Traveling so fast, being so skeered, and laffing so hard, had kinder jolted the sense outer me. But in a second it all come back.

“Why, it’s the truth I’m after, Mister Beaver,” I says. “They’s a whole heaper tales going around in the woods about you and all your doings, and I’m aiming to git at what’s so, and what ain’t. For you know as well as I do, even the finest brand of gen-u-ine truth kin very easy be stretched into the tother thing—ain’t that so?”

“Yes, sure that’s so!” he says, and “Sure is so!” the little feller follows him up. “Well now,” says Tony. “If it’s the truth yer after I kin give it to you—Here, run up to camp and fetch me some of that lie-paper!” he hollers to one of the hands. “Mebbe you’ve seen this here sticky fly-paper what ketches flies?” he asks me. “Well, I’ve invented me some sticky *lie*-paper, what’ll ketch lies as fast as the fly-paper ketches flies—sure is a handy trick!” he says.

And it sure is! When the hand come running back with the paper, there, jest like he said, was three or four great, round, black, ole lies hanging on to it, jest for all the world like flies on fly-paper.

“If there’s one thing I hate worse’n a fresh lie, it’s a ole one! But I’ll fix *you* all right!” Tony says, picking off them ole lies and stomping ’em into the ground.

“How in the world did you ever come to think of it, Mister Beaver?” I says, jest looking at the paper, and all carried away.

“Aw, it was jest a matter of using yer brains!” he says, shrugging up his shoulders, making out like he didn’t think nothing of it—but I could easy see the feller was tickled to death over his own smartness. “It come to me all of a sudden one day when I was looking at some flies on a fly-paper,” he says. “‘Lor’ me! I wished I had somepen that would ketch lies as good as that paper ketches flies,’ I thinks. Then I commenced saying over to myself, ‘Fly-paper, lie-paper, flies, lies, lies, flies, flies, lies,’ jest thataway, and *bang!* in one second it come to me that lies wa’n’t a thing in this world but flies with the ‘f’ left off! So then I seen all I had to do was jest to invent some sticky paper with the ‘f’ left outer it—that’s exactly what I done, and *that’s* why this here paper ketches lies ’stead of flies—it’s jest a matter of using yer brains. But I’m still kinder bothered,” he says, looking worried, “for the paper only ketches flies when they’s more’n one of ’em around, for course it takes more’n leaving the ‘f’ off to make a single lie match up to a fly—but it don’t really make no difference,” he says cheering up, “for lies never do come single, they allus travels in droves.”

Well, I looked and I looked at the thing, and says, “Fly-paper, lie-paper, flies, lies, lies, lies, flies,” over and over, and back’ards and for’ards jest like Tony said he’d done, but for the life of me I couldn’t git it figgered out why

jest leaving the “f” off would make flies into lies. “Excuse me, Mister Beaver,” I says. “Excuse me, sir, but—but, some way, that don’t ’pear to me to have no sense to it.”

“ ’Tain’t got no sense—that’s why it works so well!” says Tony. “Look a-here!”

With that he swishes the paper round in the air and ketches a whole slew of lies didn’t nobody know was there till the paper fetches ’em into sight.

“Well, it sure is a handy trick!” I says. “And *now* I see why it’s having no sense makes it work so good! But I never would’ve knowed it, if I hadn’t traveled all the way from Somewheres to Nowheres!”

“*Now* yer talking, young feller! You’ve ketched right on to the hang of things in this camp,” says Tony. “And seeing as yer sech a great hand for the truth, I’ll ast you to stay with us a spell and be the—the—the—Well doggone it!” says the feller, scratching his ear, “*you* know what I mean—the—the—Aw! The feller what writes up the doings of a place.”

“Historian, is the word yer aiming at,” says ole Brother Mutters, rolling his tongue ’round, mighty proud of his smartness.

“Ain’t—that—so!” says his ole buddy.

“Errrr—erk! Errrr—erk! Errrr—ROOOOOOOOO!” says the joky feller.

“Yes, *historian*—I’ll thank you not to take the words outer my mouth, Preacher Mutties!” says Tony. “Now then!” he says to me, “since you’ve traveled all the way from Somewheres to Nowheres, jest to git the truth, I’m a-going to make you the Eel River historian, and hand this here lie-paper over to you, so’s you kin try out things with it, and sort out what’s so, from what ain’t. The tales you tell about Eel River’ll be the *truth*—and the tales the tother fellers tells, why they’ll jest be the tother thing,” he says. “What mought yer name be, young feller?”

“It *mought* be Christopher Columbus, or it mought be George Washington, but it *is* Jeremire Daniel Doolittle—Jerry Dan, for short,” I says.

“Well, Jerry Dan, I’m a-going to give you a new name,” says Tony. “Fellers!” he bawls out, “meet the Truth-Teller, what’s going to tell the truth about this camp!”

At that all hands busts out with a great hullabaloo, stomping they feets, slapping they pants legs, cheering, and hollering out, “Pleased to meet you, Truth-Teller!” “Welcome to Eel River!” “Howdy, Mister Truth-Teller!” and all like that, mighty nice and friendly.

So there you see, strangers—you-all that’s reading this book—how it was I happened to go up Eel River, and to write this tale of Tony and his camp—it all jest come outer me being sech a hog for the truth!



## CHAPTER II

### THE TO-DAY TO-MORRER

Well now, strangers—you-all what's reading this book—I sure did hit Tony's camp at a mighty lucky time! I hadn't been up Eel River more'n about a week or so, and was jest gitting used to holding my eyes in place, swishing the lie-paper round to find out what was the truth, and what was the tother thing, and coming to understand why things worked so good when they didn't have no sense to 'em, when Tony pulled off one of the *most* my'rac'lous jobs even he ever put through. Dogged if the feller didn't go and hitch them powerful steers of hisn on to the wheels of time, and had time running all up and down the days, back'ards and for'ards, being yesterday and to-morrer, and last week, just whichsoever way he said for it to go. That sure was a terrible sight to see, and dangerous too, when you come to study on it, yit Tony done the whole thing for nothing in this world but to satisfy that little boy buddy of hisn, what I been telling you-all about. That little feller ain't more'n about four, going-on five years old; he runs away from his mammy to play around the log camp every chance he gits. He's got a crippled foot, and can't walk so very good, so all hands totes him, but his fav'rite riding place is Tony Beaver's shoulder, and I b'lieve he thinks Tony pulls the sun up with a string in the morning, and lets her run down ergin at night. It's a sight what he thinks o' Tony! Seems like Tony he takes a dee-light in doing all sorter outer the way stunts jest to please that kid.

Mebbe you've seen fellers take a bucket of water and swing it around so fast never a drop'll drap? Well, Tony he went 'em one better'n that. When he got his bucket going good, he stopped it right *spang upside down* over his head, and never a drop spilled. I dunno how the feller done it, and all hands was jest carried away by the sight too, but that young-un, he never batted a eye.

"I knowed you could do it, Tony," he says. "Yes, *sir, fellers!*" he says, telling 'em all, "Tony Beaver, he *kin* do it all right!"

That little feller's faith in him tickles Tony right much. It's a kind of a off-set to ole Preacher Moses Mutters, what's allus a-hanging round camp, and sing-songing out, "Yer *can't* do it, Tony—it's ergin reason!" With the tother solemn ole partner backing him up, "Ain't—that—so!"

Them two ole customers, they sets a great store by reason, and they's mightily outdone by all the onreasonable things Tony pulls off.

"Mutters" ain't that ole preacher's right name, that's jest a way the hands all has of calling him, 'count of him allus muttering round, and so gloomy-

like.

So there Tony is sorter betwixt him and the little feller; the ole preacher allus tuning up, "Yer can't do it, Tony—it's ergin reason!" and the little feller jest looking at him so trustful, and saying, "I knowed *you* could do it, Tony!"

Well then, one day, right soon after I hit the Eel River camp, that little buddy, he tuck down sick. When Tony got the word of it, he jest fa'rly tore up Jack twill he got ahold of the finest doctor anywheres round. The doc' he come up Eel River, went up Flint Holler and around Hare Hill, to where the little feller lives in a log cabin with his mammy. He looked the young-un all over, felt his pulse, had him to put out his tongue, and all like that, then he dosed him some and 'lowed he'd be all right to-morrer.

"I'll be all right to-morrer," the little feller says, saying it over after him, mighty trustful.

Well now, strangers, it was right then and there all the trouble commenced. The next morning when Tony went up Flint Holler and around Hare Hill, to the little feller's cabin, he found the young-un all in a turrible fret.

Tony, he come right inside—though it's the truth, he don't like to go under a roof, or tromp on sawed boards—and steps over to the bed, where the little feller was laying all kivered up under a quilt of the Rising Sun pattern.

"Hey now! What's the trouble, buddy?" Tony asks him.

"I can't git better, Tony," the little feller says kinder pitiful.

"Why, honey, the doc' said you'd be better to-day," Tony tells him.

"No, Tony! no!" the young-un says, all wrought up; "he said I'd be better *to-morrer!*"

Tony he burst out with a great Haw I Haw! at that. "Why, honey," he says, "to-day *is* to-morrer!"

"No, it *ain't*, Tony!" the little buddy answers him back. "This ain't to-morrer—it's jest *to-day!* An'—an'—" he says, all filling up to cry, "how kin *to-day* be to-morrer? We can't find to-morrer, Tony. Mammy and me been a-looking and looking all night for it, but to-day jest kep' right on and on being to-day and never *did* git to be to-morrer! I want to-morrer, Tony," he says, crying, "I can't git better till it comes."

There you see how it was, stranger—the young-un had got all balled up in his mind, and jest *couldn't* get it figgered out that to-day was to-morrer. And when you come to study it over, you'll see there was some sense in what he said, for it cert'nly is *so*, stranger—to-day *ain't* to-morrer—it jest natcherly *can't* be! But if it ain't, then where *is* to-morrer? Even watching it very close, a person can't hardly say when to-day quits and to-morrer

commences. And it's the truth, I don't know myself if to-day ever *does* git to be to-morrer—so it wa'n't no wonder that sick child was kinder twisted up over it.

“No, Tony! No! To-day's *to-day*—it *ain't* to-morrer!” he kep' on saying to everything Tony told him. “I can't git better till it's to-morrer—*you* git to-morrer for me,” he says putting his hand in Tony's so trustful like; “*you* kin do it easy, Tony!”

Well now, I reckon that was jest about the biggest job Tony Beaver ever had handed out to him. But he ain't never the feller to turn a job down 'count of its looking big, so he scratched his head a spell, and then he says, “Well, buddy, I'll do the best I kin.” And then he come on back to camp to figger how he was to do it.

Ole Brother Mutters 'lowed the way was to set up all night with the little feller, and when the clock struck twelve to tell him now it was to-morrer. “That's the reasonable way of doing it, Tony,” he says, and “Ain't—that—so?” says his ole buddy. “Err—*erk*, Errr—*erk*, Errr—ROOO!” sings out that joky hand, flopping his arms and making out he's crowing at them solemn ole buddies.

“But the reasonable way ain't *my* way,” Tony tells him. “And more'n that, you know I ain't never a hand to go under a roof and tromp on sawed boards.”

Howsomever the hands all 'lowed Brother Mutters was right, and they got Tony pusuaded to try that way, though he done it ergin his better jedgment.

Well, that night Tony he went up Flint Holler to the little feller's cabin, and fetched hisself in a big gray rock—what still had some moss hanging on it—to set on; for Tony he never will set in a cheer. And he told the little boy that to-morrer would be along late in the night, and he'd be there to ketch it.

So the little feller went on to sleep mighty trustful and satisfied; and Tony sets down on his gray rock by the fire, and dozes along till it come nigh midnight. Then he tiptoes over to the bed, and whispers that to-morrer would be there when the clock struck.

“*When the clock strikes,*” the little feller whispers back in a kind of a sacred voice, like he was at prayer-meeting. “O Tony!” he says, “let me set in your lap! I want to be setting there when to-morrer comes.”

So Tony he wraps the Rising Sun quilt round him, and sets down on his gray rock, with the little feller on his knee—and it was a funny sight to see Tony Beaver setting under a roof!

Well, after a little bit, the clock commenced to wheeze like it was cl'aring its throat for somepen big, and fetches out twelve strokes, and Tony hollers, “*Here's* your to-morrer, honey!”



The little feller looks all about him, up at the joists, and down at the floor, and then back ergin at the clock, and seems like he was kinder blank, like he'd expected to-morrer to jump out from somewheres and be different

"Is it to-morrer, Tony?" he asks, sorter doubtful.

"Yes, *sure* it is!" Tony says. "And now to-day you'll git better."

Well, right there Tony slipped up. He sure oughter of knowed better'n to say that to-day word.

"You said *to-day*!" the little feller hollers out, ketching him right up. "And this *is* to-day, it *ain't* to-morrer! Tony, you *fooled* me!" And with that he busts out crying like his very heart was broke. "Put me back in the bed," he says. "You fooled me, Tony, I—I don't want to set on your lap no more."

Well, that pretty nigh killed Tony, and he come on back to camp fa'rly raging. He give one holler that fetched all us hands out of the bunk-house on the jump, and standing up there in the moonlight, looking powerful tall, he told us all what had happened.

"And *that's* what comes of *me* going under a roof, and trying to be reasonable! And *now*," he hollers out, "I'm *done* with reason! And by the sap of all the white oak trees running in spring, and by the breath of the gray rocks, I'll fine me a *on*reasonable way of doing it!"

You better b'lieve all hands kep' mighty still at that, for they knowed better'n to cheep when Tony busts loose with them cuss words. But course Brother Mutters had to tune up.

"Yer *can't* do it, Tony! Yer can't put *back* the wheels of time, and yer can't put 'em for'ard neither!"

"I can't, can't I!" Tony hollers at him. And with that he let loose sech a blast of a look at that preacher, that I reckon it would of blowed him right off the bank, and down into Eel River itself, if Big Henry, what's one of Tony's stoutest hands, hadn't of seen it coming, and ketched aholt of the ole feller jest in time.

"Yoke up them oxen of mine!" Tony hollers out, and all hands jumped like he'd cracked a pistol.

Well now, stranger, it's jest like ole man Wiley tole me, them steers of Tony's sure air jest about the *most* my'raclous critters a person ever did see! Mebbe you recollect a ole song that runs kinder this away—

"Tony Beaver had a ox,  
I mind the day that he was born  
It tuck a jay bird seven years  
To fly from horn to horn."

Well, that's jest a doggoned lie, but you may know them beasts air all outer the common or folks wouldn't make up no sech tales about 'em.

Well, when the hands fetched 'em around Tony he tuck a powerful stout log chain, and hitched one end of it to they yoke, and without saying nothing to none of us he went off into the woods with the tother end. The chain it onwound, and onwound, and went crawling away into the bresh after Tony Beaver, looking like the biggest, nastiest kind of a snake a person ever *did* see. After a right smart spell, the chain it quit enrolling and lay still, 'cept that every once in a while, it'd give a kind of a jerk, like Tony was fooling with it at the tother end.

But whoop-*ee!*—all to onced that chain it give a powerful jump and commenced to run back outer the woods like the dogs was after it! Then d'rectly there come the awfulest kind of a battle betwixt Tony Beaver and that log chain. Course we all couldn't see nothing 'cept the chain's end of it—but that was a plenty! The doggoned thing it wriggled and wrestled, and lashed itself up and down, hither and yon, like it was fighting for all it was wuth to bust loose and git on outer them woods. And every now and ergin it'd hump itself up in the middle, like you've seen a inch worm do, and strain and strain to pull free thataway. But in the end Tony he won, and after another tumble thrashing and lashing of itself that jest natcherly cut the bresh all to pieces anywheres near, and even felled a couple of white oak trees, the chain 'peared to give up and lay still—'cept that it was trembling like a person with the ague.

And you better b'lieve all hands stood back outer the way, looking on with all the looks they had, for you *know*, stranger, it must of been somepen mighty onnatural that would make cold iron carry on thataway.

Well, after a spell, Tony come on back outer the woods, with the sweat jest a-running off'n him.

“Thar now, *that's* fixed!” he says, kinder panting like.

And not a one of the hands dast to ask him *what* was fixed, for they knowed doggoned well it must of been somepen turrible strange that would draw the sweat on Tony Beaver.

Tony looks around at us all, and he says, “One end of that chain's hitched to the wheels of time, and the tother's hitched to them beasts—and *now* I'll have time going to suit me!”

And with that he spits on his hands and ketched aholt of his raw-hide whip, that's got a lash to it pretty nigh half a mile long, and he swirls it out and cracks it, *Pough!* And them oxen, they bowed they heads and heaved into the yoke. And they heaved, *and they heaved*—but nothing didn't happen.

“Yer *can't* do it, Tony! It's ergin reason!” ole Brother Mutters sings out.

“Man! I’m *done* with reason!” Tony hollers back at him. And this time Big Henry wa’n’t quick enough, and the blue-lightning look Tony lets loose at that preacher blowed him clean off’n the ground, and landed him down in a bresh pile a right smart piece away.

And Tony he cracks his whip ergin, and hollers “Yer-r—*rup!*” at the team. The crack of that whip was like a thunderclap in cl’ar weather, and that holler of Tony’s went bounding on down Eel River, chipping the rocks off from side to side, till it jest natcherly bounded out in the levels at the fur end. And *Great Day in the Morning!* Them beasts went for’ards, and the *wheels of time commenced to turn!*

Well, *sirs!* When that happened, stranger, it was like the whole world had busted loose from her brakes, and it made the stoutest hand there reel like he had the blind staggers—all, that is, ’cept Tony. It ketched ole Brother Mutters in the stomick, and he fell over acrost a stump, and commenced to give up his victuals.

“Whoop-*ee!* I got her going!” Tony sings out. “By the breath of the gray rocks! I got time going to suit me now!”

But hold and below! It wa’n’t more’n the shake of a lamb’s tail ’fore Tony and all of us seen he’d slipped up bad. Dogged if he hadn’t them beasts headed wrong, and what do you reckon! ’Stead of pulling down the to-morrer he was after he commenced fetching up yesterday, and the day before, and then d’rectly it was last week, and in a nother pair of seconds it was last month itself! Well, *sirs!* that was jest a little more’n the hands could stand, and they all busts out hollering at Tony to quit.

Stranger, did you ever see the past fetched back into the present?

Well, I kin tell you, you need never crave to. You see like it is—we looks down the past through a kind of a haze, like them pretty blue mists you’ll see hanging over the mountains in Indian summer weather, and everything looks mighty meller and nice through it. But when Tony set time to vomiting up them yesterdays thataway, they come up into the cold light of the present all mother-naked as you might say, and it was a *turrible* sight to see ’em. Big Henry seen hissself drunk last month, and while he’d looked back on it as a kinder glorious *event*, when the world was all lit up, and him the biggest Mister Man in it, it didn’t look thataway now. When he seen that past of his laid right out there in the present, he knowed that was one time he’d jest natcherly been a fool for want of sense. And the tother fellers seen things too that made ’em all swaller powerful hard. What I seen I don’t aim to tell.

Every feller seen his own past, but couldn’t see the tother feller’s; so didn’t nobody know what it was ole Brother Mutters seen, but whatsoever it was, it sunt him off in a long explanation to the Lord.

Well, Tony he seen right off he'd made a big mistake, so he drew them beasts to a halt, and then he had 'em to back, back, and he run all them yesterdays and last weeks down into place ergin, very keerful like. All hands could hear them past days falling back down the skidways of time, *Plup! Plup! Plup!* to wait there for Judgment Day. It sure was a mighty strange and awesome kind of a sound—and not a sound that any common person would crave to hear.

Well, Tony he seen the trouble was he had them beasts headed towards the east, and course thataway they was pulling up the west, which was where all them yesterdays had went. So he turned 'em round westward; and this time when he cracked his whip, and hollered at 'em, it wa'n't but a minute 'fore they fetched into view jest the prettiest little to-morrer a person ever did see. But it was so all-fired skeery, it was nigh impossible to hold it. It wouldn't more'n peep over the edge of to-day, when, whoop-*ee!* it'd run back ergin into its hole like a groundhog what had seen its shadder. Time and ergin them beasts fetched that to-morrer down, and time and ergin, strain as they would, it slipped erway from 'em. So in the end Tony seen he'd have to rigger out a nother way of ketching it. And he knowed, too, he'd have to hurry, for by now it was right late in the day, and it wouldn't be so very long 'fore that to-morrer would be swinging into place at its natcherl time—and course that wouldn't do that little feller no good at all.

So Tony he studied a spell, and then he had the hands to git to work and sew a whole parcel of feed-bags together. And when they had a big lot of 'em fixed, and all spread out on the ground, Tony smeared 'em over right thick with tar, and then he went on back to his team.

This time he didn't crack his whip or holler at 'em; he jest whispered somepen right easy in the year of one of 'em. What that word was *I* don't know, stranger. All I know is that the minute he'd said it, and jumped back outer the way, them powerful beasts give sech a heave ergin the yoke, that they jest fa'rly fetched that to-morrer down with sech a run and a jump, that it bounded out head over heels, and landed down right spang in the middle of all them tarred bags—and *thar it stuck!* The tar it helt it, and when the team was drawed back by the turrible pull of time at the tother end, that to-morrer it busted loose from the string of tother days, and was left laying out there flat in broad daylight.

Well, *sirs!* it was the furst time in all of our lives that any of us hands had ever seen a to-morrer laid out along side of a to-day, and we sure was carried away by the sight. It was one time we jest natcherly had to hold our eyes in place, or they'd of popped right outer our heads and down into all that tar like a row of buttons. We looked, and we looked, and it's the truth we couldn't find nothing 'cept cuss words to say erbout it.

Don't ask *me* what the doggoned thing looked like, for I jest ain't got the words to tell you and you kin easy see I ain't no hand to make a tale up and pass it off for truth.

Well, after all hands had jest erbout cussed theyselves dry over it, Tony had 'em to ketch aholt of them bags and tote the to-morrer up Flint Holler. There they spread it out in front of the little boy's cabin. Tony he went inside and fetched the young-un out in his arms, and the minute he laid eyes on it, his face all broke into a laugh. "It's to-morrer!" he says.

It beats me how that kid knowed right off it was to-morrer, for it's the truth, stranger, *I* wouldn't know to-morrer from last week—no, sir, I wouldn't, not even if you was to lay 'em out right side by side! But course you know children is different.

"It's to-morrer!" the little feller says, "and *now* I'll be all right!" And with that he reaches his arm round Tony's neck right tight, and snuggles his head erginst him. "I knowed *you* could do it, buddy!" he says.

So Tony he knowed he'd been right in picking the onreasonable way.

Well now, stranger, you mought think after all that big to-do, we could of had some rest up Eel River; but you got to recollect that when any feller's so high-handed as to pull a to-morrer outer place like that, they's mighty apt to see trouble 'fore all's over; and I tell you, it wa'n't but jest a little bit 'fore all us fellers run up erginst jest about the *worst* piece of trouble a person ever did see.

But not knowing what we was heading for, all hands lef that to-morrer laying up there in the holler for the little feller to git well on, and made for camp as onconsarned as you please.

Tony he went off in the woods ergin, and d'rectly that thar log chain commenced to squirm and jump erbout mighty oneasy like. And then all to onced from 'way off somewheres, we heard Tony holler, "*Look out! Look out!*" And Great Day! That chain come a-lashing, and a-t'aring outer the woods like a black-snake racer—and you hear me, all hands side-stepped outer its way in a hurry.

Well then, Tony come on back, and he says, "*Now* we'll knock off and call it a day."

So all hands tumbled into the bunk-house early, and was snoring along jest as pretty and nice as you please, when late in the night, ole Brother Moses Mutters sets up a tumble lamentation, groaning and moaning.

"What in the *Heaven's* the matter with *you*? Air you tuck in the stumick ergin?" Big Henry hollers at him, mighty mad at being waked up. Only it wa'n't *Heavens* Big Henry said, and he didn't use no sech genteel word as stumick neither, for he's a kind of a rough hand 'at'll lay his tongue to any word he pleases, and be jest as apt as not to come right out and call a bull a

bull, 'stead of a "gentleman cow," like any person what's been raised right knows it ought to be called.

"Big Henry," says ole Brother Mutters, looking mighty wild and solemn with his hair all tousled up on end, and nothing but his shirt on, "Big Henry, git up from there, and make ready to die—for the end of the world is coming at sunup!" And with that the ole feller busts out with a turrible howl, and flops down on his knees. "Lord, I never done it," he says. "It was all Tony Beaver's doing! Lord, this is me—Moses Mutters speaking. Do pray take notice *I* didn't have no hand in it, it was that crazy Tony Beaver——"

"*Quit that!*" Big Henry hollers at him, jumping outer his bunk, and jerking the preacher up standing. "You quit telling the Lord tales on Tony Beaver or I'll jest nacherly bust your head off," he says. "Now then stand up on your two hoofs, and tell the fellers what's the trouble."

All hands was awake by now, sitting up in the bunks, kinder blinking in the lantern light.

Brother Mutters had to ketch his breath, and swaller some, 'fore he could git his words out, Big Henry'd jerked him up so sudden; but he layed it all out plain enough onced he got his wind.

"Don't you all know we're a-heading for to-morrer jest as fast as the world kin travel—and *there ain't no to-morrer thar*," he says.

"Ain't—that—so!" says his ole Buddy.

The fellers all stiffened up mighty pale at that, and commenced to cuss to theyselves.

"Well, I reckon there's a plenty more to-morrers—Tony he only tuck one," Big Henry says.

"*Yes!* He only tuck one!" the preacher hollers out. "But he tuck the one we *got to have!* O my Lord! Tony Beaver's made a hole in the roadbed of time, and we're a-heading straight for it!"

Jack Sullivan rips out a powerful cuss word at that. "What'll happen when we hit the hole?" he says.

"She'll *drap*—the world'll drap right through it," Brother Mutters hollers. "She'll either drap *away* from the sun, and all flesh will be froze to death; or she'll drap spang into it, and all be burnt alive, like a Juney bug in a light."

*Well, sirs!* At that all hands bust outer the bunk-house, like logs busting over a dam, and made for where Tony was laying out in the moonlight, with his head on a gray rock.

"Git up from there, Tony Beaver!" we hollers at him. "Git up 'fore the world draps!"

And then, turrible skeered, and all clammering at onced, we layed out to him what we was heading for.

“Aw, it’ll be all right,” Tony says, gitting up and shaking hissself more like some kind of a wild varmint than a human.

But us hands kinder sensed that for all his bluff he was right oneasy hissself, and that skeered us worse’n ever. Some of the fellers was all for rustling round, and trying to run that there to-morrer back into place ergin ’fore it was too late. But Tony he wouldn’t hear to that.

“Any hand that wants kin take that there log chain back in the bresh, and hitch it to what I had it hitched to,” he says, “but you hear *my* horn, I’d as soon have the world drap, as to fool with *that* place ergin!”

And recollecting how that chain had carried on, there wa’n’t a hand that craved to take the job.

“More’n that,” Tony says, “that there to-morrer’s jest natcherly ruined anyhow, and you couldn’t run it back into place ergin, all stuck up with tar like it is.”

That ’peared to be sense, too, and it looked like there wa’n’t a thing to do but jest set and wait for the world to drap.

Well, while we was all standing round waiting—and a plenty of us was shaking like they had the buck ague, and mebbe I was one of ’em—the question come up, if the world was to drap, when would she do it? Some fellers ’lowed it’d be at midnight, and some ergin said it wouldn’t be till daybreak. So there they had it back and forth, and all got so hot, that Big Henry, and Jack Sullivan, that’s Irish stock off’n Piney Ridge, even squared theyselves off to settle it with they fists. But the tother fellers made ’em quit, for they said it’d look kinder ornery, and mebbe give the Eel River crew a bad name, if they was to go into Kingdom Come fighting. That ca’med the Sullivan feller, but Big Henry said he’d as leave go there fighting, as to go any other way. But erbout then the little fiddler had the sense to look at the time.

“Here!” he sings out, “it’s after midnight now, and she ain’t drapped yit!”

“Then it’ll be at sunup!” ole Brother Mutters busts out. “She’ll drap at daybreak! O Lord! *I* never done it! Lord, this is Moses Mutters speaking. It was all Tony’s——”

“Didn’t I tell you to *quit that?*” Big Henry hollers at him, dancing up to the preacher, and looking powerful dangerous. “You shet up now and forever!” he says, “and more’n that, when we git across into the next world, if I ketch you up at the Golden Gate tattling out tales on Tony Beaver to Saint Peter, I’ll jest natcherly bust you down to the tother place,” he says. Only Big Henry laid his tongue to a stronger word than “the tother place.”

Well, that dried up Brother Mutters on that head; for skeered as he was of what was coming, he was more skeered of what was right beside him. So

he went off on another trail, and commenced telling the Lord how it looked like a shame to have the world come to a end in sech nice fall weather. And that was kinder funny too, for heretofore, the ole feller was allus preaching erbout the world being a desert drear. But he tuned up different now.

“O Lord,” he blubbers, “don’t let the world drap in fall weather when the ground smells so good, and the trees is all colored up nice. If she’s bound to drap, let it come in a cold spell in the winter, or along late in March, when the traveling’s bad, and the mud up to the hubs of the wheels; but do *pray* don’t let her drap *now!*”

That set all the hands off sniffing, and wiping they sleeves acrost they noses. For if ole Brother Mutters had to tell the Lord how pretty it was in fall weather, he didn’t have to tell none of *them*. They jest natcherly knowed for theyselves how the ridges looked, all colored up red and yellor, with the sun shining over ’em, and the squirrels barking up every holler on frosty mornings. “Now jest look what Tony Beaver’s done!” they says sniffing and using they sleeves; “gone and ruined the world on a pretty day in October!”

Tony he told ’em to shet up all that foolishness, and he jest kep’ a-standing up there on his gray rock with his arms folded, and trying to make out like he didn’t keer nothing for nobody. But Big Henry noticed he was staring mighty hard at a pint off erginst the sky. “What’s that you’re a-looking at, Tony?” he asks him.

“Well,” Tony says, “I been noticing these last mornings, that the sun strikes right betwixt them two big pines jest as it tops the ridge. If she don’t strike there this morning, then we’ll know the world is kinder out of plumb.”

Well, *sirs!* That sunt all hands limp, for it looked like Tony hissself wa’n’t so sure how things was going to be. And when Tony Beaver’s oneasy, you better b’lieve it’s time for any common person to be skeered outer his very gizzards. All the fellers bust loose into a turrible cussing and praying and clammering, like a gang of wild geese what had lost they leader.

By now it was drawing on towards dawn, there was a pale glimmer in the east, and them two pine trees stood up powerful black and strange-looking erginst the sky and every last one of us could feel the goose flesh walking up his back. All to onced Tony Beaver raised up his hand and says, “Listen!” mighty solemn.

Every feller quit cussing, and ketched his breath at that, and over in the woods we heard a little bird cheep, and another answered it back, and then another and another. Not singing yit, jest cl’aring they throats to tune up. And that was a turrible awesome sound, for every hand knowed it was the forerunner of dawn.



And Great Day in the Morning! Jest that minute a strange kind of a dampness come out all over the ground, like the earth itself had broke into a cold sweat. And while we was all a-staring down at that, and listening to the birds cheep, and knowing we was right on the edge of to-morrer, and *no to-morrer there*—jest that minute the whole world commenced to tremble and to quiver, and to kind of squat down like a skittish horse what sees somepen turrible on in front.

“*She’s drapping! She’s drapping!*” ole Brother Mutters screeches out, and fell over like he was dead.

The world give another kind of a long tremble, and then, *whoop-ee!* it give sech a powerful leap and a bound, that it knocked every feller there right off’n his feet head over heels down on the ground—all, that is, ’cept Tony. For a pair of seconds it seemed like we kind of hung on the edge of somepen, and then there was another kick and a scramble, and after that the world settled down like it was over all right.

“She made it! She made it!” Tony busts loose. “By the breath of the gray rocks, she made it all right!”

Jest that minute the sun come up over the ridge, and hung right spang betwixt them two pines, and all the little birds tuck a big mouthful of song, and commenced to pour it out. All hands set up on the ground looking round kinder dazed; and there was jest about the prettiest fall day a person ever *did* see, with the long blue shadders laying over the frost, and the mists smoking off’n the mountains that was all red and yellor and joyful.

“Tony,” Big Henry says, gitting onto his feet kinder weak like, “what happened?”

“Why, you big *idgit*,” Tony says looking him squar’ in the eyes, “don’t you know this is a *Leap Year*? Do you reckon,” he says, “I’d be sech a fool for want of sense, as to pull a to-morrer outer a year what couldn’t leap the hole, and what had a extry day to spare anyhow?”

Big Henry looks at him for quite a spell, and then he says, “Well, I *will be dogged!*” kinder awestruck.

Well, stranger, you jest can’t make *me* b’lieve Tony had it all figgered out as fine as that, for he ain’t no kind of a forelooker, and if he wanted a to-morrer, he’d help hissself to it and never stop to think; and I b’lieve him happening to hit a leap year wa’n’t nothing in this world but his doggoned luck.

But it was all too much for ole Brother Mutters, and they laid *him* out for dead till nigh sundown.



## CHAPTER III

### OWNING THE EARTH

Well now, I jest have to tell you-all that they's *some* things a person can't never git the rights of lessen he's been up Eel River and met Tony Beaver right face to face. That was what that missionary woman from 'way up North somewheres—Maine or Spain, I fergits which State it was—come to find out.

I was still a-hanging round Tony's camp, taking notes as you mought say, and sorting out the truth with the lie-paper, when that there woman come up Eel River with her mouth all made up to save the soul of Tony Beaver.

It was a right funny thing how the woman ever got word of Tony 'way up North yonder, and it was all on account of Tony's hitching them steers of hisn onto the wheels of time and pulling down that there to-morrer for the little feller. That was somepen to talk about sure 'nough, and I reckon some of the hands muster blabbed, for the tale leaked out through the woods 'fore I could git all the lies sifted outer it, and commenced to run wild from mouth to mouth, gitting bigger every second—though I reckon it was big enough when it commenced.

Well, traveling thataway it wa'n't hardly no time 'fore the tale got up North to Maine or Spain, whichsoever place it was that woman lived at, and the minute the woman heard it, she laid her years back and fa'rly come a-loping down to West Virginia, burning up the trail, for she 'lowed any sech doings as that was jest a pure scandal, and the feller what done 'em must think he owned the earth, and if he thought that, he was a-heading right straight for—for—Aw well! You know the place I mean 'thout me saying it—and it was her business for to save him.

Well, when she come down from the North and hit these parts and commenced inquiring round for Tony Beaver, she run up erginst the same snag I'd hit, for seemed like nobody couldn't locate him for her. Everybody

she ast tole her he had his camp up Eel River, but seemed like nobody couldn't say where that river was. She was a right smart woman, and had been a school teacher back up North, 'fore she tuck to saving souls, so she hollers for a map, and asts 'em to pint out Eel River to her. Well, there was some Eel Rivers here and yonder out through the country, but didn't none of 'em 'pear to be Tony's. Everybody knowed it was up Eel River he lived, but couldn't nobody pint to the place on the map.

The woman 'lowed she never had struck sech a *ignorant* parcel of folks afore in all of her life. She said it was very distressing to run up against sech ignorance—an' I reckon it was. I reckon, too, the woman never would of got up Eel River, if Tony hisself hadn't got the word that she was wanting to see him, and sunt for her. He sunt his path out for her, but 'course Tony wouldn't never let that there path travel with a lady like it traveled with me, for he's allus mighty nice and polite to the ladies. So he had two hands to go with the thing, to hole it down, and make it pace along like it ought with a lady.

It was Big Henry he sunt 'cause he's sech a powerful stout hand, he could hold the path down, and he had that little Eyetalian feller to go along with him to give style to things. Eyetalians now, strangers, if you'll notice, they ain't much force in the woods, but jest put 'em at any kind of a digging job, and you'll find 'em nigh perfect in dirt. I reckon that's why Tony allus has a few of 'em in camp—and 'count of they nice manners too.

Big Henry now, he ain't got no style at all to *him*. He's jest one of these here great big two-fisted Jim-bruisers of a feller, what's a boss hand at his vittles, and at felling trees, spudding tanbark, and skidding logs, but no good at all with the ladies, and handles his table fork like it's a cant hook. That was why Tony had the little Eyetalian to go along, 'cause he has all kinds of manners, and knows when to take off his hat, when to stand up and set down, and all like that. The missionary woman tuck quite a shine to him 'count of him being so genteel, and on the way out back ergin she tole him 'most everything that had happened to her in Tony's camp, and *that's* how I come to know so well jest what the woman thought.

You would of thought that ole Brother Moses Mutters would of wanted to go out and meet the woman and give her the glad hand, seeing as they was both on the same job, but no, sir! Him and his ole partner Ain't-That-So went off up a holler and kinder sulked to theyselves all the time the woman was in camp, for Brother Mutters has got him a mighty special brand of religion, and he jest natcherly *despises* any other feller's brand.

Well, Big Henry and the little Eyetalian, they tied a right stout rope around that there path's neck and led the thing out to where the woman from Maine or Spain was a-waiting for 'em, having got the word that they was

coming. The woman was right much tuck back when she seen the way she was to travel, for she hadn't never run acrost nothing like that afore. But she had spunk all right—I will say that for her!

“You stepa on heem, lady,” says the little Eyetalian, taking off his hat and making a grand bow.

The woman balked for a spell, but in the end she says, “Well, I come right down from the Pilgrim fathers—and mothers—and I'll not go back on my stock,” she says. “One of my feets is Pilgrim, and the tother is Puritan, an' I'll trample on that heathenish thing with both of 'em,” she says, gritting her jaws.

I dunno what the woman meant by that, lessen Pilgrim and Puritan is some kinder brand of shoes they got up North. I know they's got mighty good stout shoes up yonder.

“Stepa on heem, lady, you stepa on heem, and I holda da hand,” says the little Eyetalian, jest as nice and polite as could be. And I'll be dogged if that ain't jest what he done! I got to hand it to that little feller. For all he's a foreigner, he's got nerve all right, and it's the truth, he helt the woman's hand all the way to camp.

So that was the way they traveled. The little Eyetalian walking along 'side the path, holding the woman's hand, and talking to her mighty nice and genteel all the time, and Big Henry not saying nothing, walking along behind, hanging on to the rope and bracing his muscles to hole the path down. And it tuck some holding too, for seemed like having Pilgrim and Puritan—whatever they was—tromp on it that away made the thing powerful skittish. The sweat was jest a-running offer Big Henry when he got to camp, and he tole Jack Sullivan he'd liefer hole down a four-horse team of mules 'an that path when it wanted to go. And knowing how that thing kin travel when it gits ready, I don't blame the feller.

Well, they got to camp all safe, but right then and there the woman got another shock, for it's the truth, strangers, if a person ever sees that lumber camp of Tony's he ain't ever liable to fergit it ergin. I ain't never reely tole you-all jest what the place looks like, jest for fear you might think I wa'n't telling you the truth, and ever since they commenced to call me “Truth-Teller,” I've felt like I had what you might call a reputation to hole up, and I've jest come to hate a lie worse 'an anything in this world. I may be a fool but that's the way I feel about it. One time I rec-lect hearing ole Brother Mutters preaching, and he says, refuting some statement, “My breth'en, *that's* a lie! And why is it a lie?” he hollers out, thumping down hard on the desk in front of him. “I'll tell you why—it's a lie because it *hain't* so!” That sure was one time the ole feller hit the nail right on the head, for it's a fact, the onliest thing in this world the matter with a lie is that it ain't so. That's

the very reason why I don't aim to tell you nothing about Tony's camp for fear you might think it was a lie because it wa'n't so.

Well, to double back on the trail to where we was—that there missionary woman was right smartly set back when she got a good look at the place she'd struck. It wasn't like nothing she'd ever seen afore, and I reckon she wished she was back home ergin and had a-lef' Eel River alone. Howsomedever, now she had come she knowed it was neck or no duck, as the saying is, and she'd have to stay with her pig and see the job through.

But Tony, he's allus mighty genteel with the ladies, and he come for'ard jest as nice and common as you please. "Welcome, stranger," he says.

Well, the woman she wa'n't used to things too free and easy, and she draws back, and says kinder short, "My name's Miss Preserved Green."

"You say you was preserved green," says Tony mightily s'prised, for the woman cert'nly didn't look it.

"I said my *name* was Preserved Green," says the woman like she's mad, and buttoning up her mouth right tight ergin.

"*Aw-oh! Ex—*cuse me!" says Tony, seeing he'd slipped up bad. "Miss Preserves, pleased to meet you," he says making a fresh start, and holding out his hand.

I reckon that woman kinder sensed she'd better not shake hands with Tony Beaver; but it would of looked awk'ard not to, with him so friendly and all, so she done it. But she told the little Eyetalian afterwards that right then and there she knowed she'd made a big mistake, for the minute she give her hand to hisn, and looked up in his face, somepen kinder slided away inside of her, and it seemed like she could look right through Tony's eyes, and at the back of 'em was forest trees waving, and the sky with clouds trailing over it; and in the shake of a lamb's tail, she jest didn't know *nothing* 'cept mountains, and mountains, stretching away pretty nigh to the end of the world, and a sky over ev'ything that was bigger'n the world itself; with the wind blowing down the hollers from 'w—a—y off yonder somewheres, and going on by to 'w—a—y off somewheres else and all around the good hot smell of the ground warm in the sun. And seemed like all them things she'd been raised on, and set store by, like sin and jedgment, went blowing a—w—a—y off yonder with the wind inter never, and it come to her all at onced that mebbe the Lord wa'n't setting up there in the sky watching to see sin trip the world up, but was out there in the mountains enjoying creation.

Right the minute she thought that, she seen Tony Beaver had aholt of her soul and was a-dragging it to deestruction a-long with hisn. At that all the blood of her anchestors riz up inside of her, she tuck a great brace and dug in with both feet. An' it's like I said, one foot was Pilgrim and the tother was

Puritan, and them good shoes saved her onced she got 'em planted stiff and straight. She snatched her hand outer Tony's, and the minute she was free she was right back in her ev'yday self, and knowed she had a never dying soul to save, and fit it for the skies. She recollected too what she'd come for.

"Mister Beaver," she says mighty solemn, and like she was looking across the fence into the next world, "I have come for to save your soul."

Tony he looks kinder dub'us at that, but he ain't never one to disappint a lady, so he says, "Well anyhow, let's set a spell and talk it over."

So there the two of 'em sets theyselves down on the banks of Eel River 'long side of each other. The hands they fetched out a cheer for the woman, but Tony he jest set on the ground, for he never will set in a cheer if he kin help hisself. He'll set on a log, or a rock mebbe, but most times he jest hunkers right down ergin the ground. And when he's figgering on one of his big jobs, he's mighty apt to sprawl right out flat with his back to the earth. That's on account of who his mother is—leastways that's what some of the hands told me, but I don't reely know nothing at all about *that*.

Well, Tony he sets on the ground, and the lady she sets in the cheer, with her skirts well drawed down, for she wa'n't none of these here little fly around, pretty-by-nights, but was a settled woman with a stern and rockbound kind of a face, like they say the country is up yonder where she comes from.

All us hands had knocked off work, and was kinder standing 'round in the background, passing time away trading knives, stretching, and seeing who could spit the furthest, and all like that, while we was waiting to see the woman git in her fine work on Tony's soul. But Tony he looks back at us, and hollers out, "Here, quit that foolishness, and rustle round now and fetch the comp'ny a snacker somepen to eat—fetch her some of them huckleberries," he says.

Some of the hands went off to do like Tony said, but the woman she didn't waste no time waiting for vittles, but got right down to business.

"Mister Beaver," she starts out——

"Aw, jest call me Tony," he says. "I ain't used to no mistering."

The woman looked mighty prim at that, but she made out like she didn't hear and commenced ergin. "Mister Beaver, from things I see up here, and from all I've hearded folks tell, it looks like to me you must think you own the earth."

Tony he give her a mighty quick and peculiar look at that, and all the hands acted sorter oneasy. I hadn't been in camp then more'n a couple of weeks or so, so I didn't know what the trouble was, but I knowed *somepen* dangerous was in the air. I reckon the woman kinder sensed trouble too, for she gripped her hands right tight together in her lap like she knowed she was

up erginst somepen powerful strange, and all contrary to anything she'd knowed in the past.

Tony he didn't answer her back nothing when she said that erbout him owning the earth, but he fetched out his pipe and lighted her up kinder thoughtful like.

Now when Tony Beaver smokes up Eel River, a person could easy think the woods was afire, and the clouds of smoke he blowed out then come nigh choking the pore woman to death.

Well, that there little Eyetalian, he felt kinder responsible for the woman, 'count of having helt her hand (*Aw you know how 'tis!*) and he hated mighty bad too, to see Tony doing somepen that wa'n't the style, so he slinked up right easy, and whispers in Tony's year that it wa'n't genteel to smoke where ladies is—this happened a right smart while ago, you onderstand.

“Dogged if that ain't so!” Tony says, and with that he knocked his pipe right out—and it's the truth to hear him you woulda thought it was thunder back in the woods—and hollers for his plug of terbacker. Three or four of the hands ketched aholt of it, and drug the thing up to Tony, and he tuck a broad axe and whaled hisself off a right smart quid. Then he sets down ergin and *chaws*, 'stead of smoking, 'cause he's allus mighty pertic'lar to be perlite to the ladies.

It was erbout then the hands fetched up them huckleberries Tony'd hollered for. Now, strangers,—you-all that's reading this book—it's like I've been telling you right along, things grows mighty fine and large up Eel River, and it's the truth, them berries sure was somepen to see! It had been a right good year for fruit all over the country; but even erlowing for that, and they being all swelled up with the rain, them Eel River huckleberries had jest fa'rly outgrewed theyselves. There wa'n't airy one of 'em smaller'n a man's two fists together, and a heap of the things run up to the size of punkins: and you know, strangers, that *is* large for huckleberries.

The size of 'em jest plum scan'lized that missionary woman, and when Tony hands 'em out to her, and says, “Help yerself, take one, take two, take damned nigh all,” like a person does with comp'ny, she wouldn't tech a one of 'em, for she knowed berries that size was a pure sin.

Tony he was kinder set back at that, and he grabbed them huckleberries and pitched 'em all into Eel River; and every last one of 'em made a splash pretty nigh fifty feet high—which was right pretty to see, but sorter onnatcheral too.

The woman she says, “That's right, Mister Beaver! You got to remember you don't own the earth—the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.”

“The fullness thereof,” Tony says, looking kinder tickled, and all us hands had to turn to one side and laf behind our hands too, 'cause we

knowed Tony was thinking of some of the moonshine they got up Eel River. Well, I'm for temp'ence myself, so I don't know nothing erbout it, but I've heared the tother hands say jest one swaller of that lick'er'll fa'rly make a rabbit spit in a bulldog's eye.

The woman she'd hit the pike of salvation now, and she never broke her stride, but jest headed right on. "No, Mister Beaver," she says. "Everything's mighty fine and monstrous up here, and I reckon you think yer a powerful big Mister Man, but I'm right here to tell you, you *don't own the earth.*"

Well, that was the third time the woman had said that, and it was jest the *one* time too many.

"*Don't own the earth!*" Tony bellers at her: and with that he spit the quid out'n his mouth, and he stood up—and *he stood up!*—AN' HE STOOD UP! And every time he done it he growed taller and taller. The furst time his head went level with the white oak trees; the second time it was over the top of the ridge; and the third time it went bang into the sky.

"O my lands!" the woman says, and she jumps up right quick out'n her cheer, and looks about her powerful oneasy. And well she might, for when she looked she was all alone up a faraway holler in the woods. There wa'n't any Tony Beaver, there wa'n't any lumber camp, there wa'n't any hands no more, and Eel River itself had done went in the ground. Looked like what had been Tony wasn't nothing but a gray cliff of rocks hanging outer the ridge: what had been the lumber camp was the mountain itself; and what had been the hands standing round, laffing and whispering together, was jest the hickory and white oak saplings with the wind blowing through they leaves.

(Where we all went to, stranger, I can't tell you-all, for it's the truth, I jest don't know.)

*Well, sirs!* It cert'nly did come sudden to that woman to find herself out all alone in them far-away woods, with nothing but the wind blowing through them saplings what jest a minute back had been a husky parcel of men folks.

Strangers, was you ever out in the mountains alone, and all to onced somepen comes over you? Yer alone, and yit you h'ain't alone. It looks like the lonesomeness itself has kinder come alive, and is creeping up at you in somepen powerful onnatural. Seems like you hear somepen whispering behind you, and you jump round right quick to look, and ain't nothing there—'cept the underbresh and the earth, and mebbe a gray rock looking at you mighty close and cur'us. And ergin d'rectly you think somepen's behind you, and ergin you jump round—and ain't nothing there. All up and down the spine of your back commences to feel powerful lonesome, and you wished you could see both ways to onced. And it ain't no kinder wild varmint yer skeered of—it's somepen *worse*. You pick out a right stout tree



and squoze yerself up erginst it, for yer erbliged to have somepen betwixt the spine of yer back and whatsoever it is that's creeping up at you outer the woods around, the earth below, and the sky up yonder.

When that happens to a hand out in the woods, sometimes he prays, but most times he jest runs, and he'd be glad then to see his worst enemy so long as he come in the shape of a human.

Well, that was what happened to that woman, all alone out there in them distant woods, coming right atop of Tony, and the lumber camp, and all us hands going out so sudden. I reckon it was the first time in all of her life that the woman had ever been right up erginst nature, with nothing betwixt her and it. It sure did give her a powerful naked feeling. She heared the wind *rustle—rustle—rustle* through them saplings; she seen the sky mighty w-i-d-e and empty overhead, and she knowed somepen was a-stealing up—*stealing* up at her outer the woods. She jumped one way to look, and wa'n't nothing there. She jumped the tother way and looked, and ergin there wa'n't nothing there, 'cept the Big Stillness.

Jest about then a rain crow w-a-y off yonder on a far ridge commenced to holler in that kinder wide lonesome *hoo-hoo-hoo* way they got, like there wa'n't nothing in all this world but woods, and mountains, and sky. Well, sir, that bird, it jest natcherly finished the woman right up. Pilgrim and Puritan, even them stout shoes failed her *then*. She bust loose with a turrible screech; and once she let the breaks down and commenced to yell, she jest hooped and hollered and screamed—she pretty nigh bust the sky wide open screeching, and every screech she let out fa'rly scraped her soul down to rock bottom.

“Aw, Mister Beaver! Aw, Mister Beaver! Aw, *Mis-ter B-E-A—ver!*” She hollers; and then she ketched her breath and listened, but only her own voice saying “B-e-a—ver,” come back at her from over ferninst a ridge. Well, with that she got down and jest natcherly *scratched gravel* and screeched.

“Aw, Tony Beaver! Aw, Tony! *Aw, Tony!* Aw, please, sir! Please! P-l-e-a-s-e, Mister Tony Beaver! *A-a-w, T-o-n-y!*”

Well, that fetched him, and there he was ergin—there was Tony looking at her, there was all us hands ergin, and the lumber camp and Eel River, and there was even the very cheer she'd been a-setting in.

My Golly, but the woman was glad to be back from that wide empty place!

“Was you wanting me, marm?” Tony says jest as nice and perlite as ever.

The woman ketched her breath, trying to gather herself together, and smooth herself out.

“I—was jest wanting to—to say *good-bye*,” she says kinder short-winded and weak in the knees, and not looking Tony straight in the eye.

“You was saying looked like I thought I owned the earth,” Tony says.

“No—no, sir!” the woman answers back right quick. “Aw, no, Mister Beaver, sir, I never reely said nothing like that, you—you—you jest *thought* I said it.”

“I don’t own the earth,” says Tony, “*the earth owns me.*”

“Yes, sir—yes, so I sees,” the woman says mighty limp and small for she could still see the look of that gray cliff hanging outer Tony’s face, and mountain ridges, and forest trees blowing in the wind, at the back of his eyes, and the sight of it made her powerful oneasy to git away from there, and git on back home to Maine or Spain. “And now if you please, Mister Beaver,” she says, “I’ll thank you to have the hands ride me on outer here, while—while here is *here!*” she says, for the pore woman didn’t know what moment *here* might be *there*, and if it was to come to be, she jest didn’t know how in the world she’d ever git home to where she lived at.

So Tony had the fellers to fetch eround the path ergin, and sunt her out on it, with Big Henry to hold the path down, and that nice genteel little Eyetalian hand to ca’m the lady down. That little feller tole me afterwards that he was ve-ree sympatica with the pore lady all the way. I dunno what the feller meant, lessen that’s the Eyetalian for holding hands.

Well anyhow, the woman went on back to where she belonged, but I’ve heard tell she was a changed critter from that day on, and allus ’lowed there was some things a person couldn’t reely onderstand, lessen they’d been up Eel River, and met Tony Beaver right face to face.

For *that’s* the way we do  
In the Eel River crew!



## CHAPTER IV

### BIG MUSIC

Doggone it! I wished Tony Beaver would quit being so all-fired reckless! Why, I b'lieve some day that feller'll turn the world right spang upside down jest for to see how would she look thataway! There was more times than one up Eel River when I was skeered right down to bedrock, and would of laid back my years and shot for home if Tony hadn't of named me the Truth-Teller, and laid a kind of a sacred trust on me, so I knowed I had to stay with the job, and hang onto the truth no matter where it might take me—and it sure tuck me into some strange places.

I'm mighty glad though, I happened to be in camp when the big music busted in, for that sure was a great time, and folks have tole so many lies about it, that I'm glad to give you-all the straight truth in this here tale that's been all tried out with that paper of Tony's and every lie sifted outer it.

Well, Tony sure was fooling with somepen powerful dangerous that time, and yit the whole thing commenced with nothing more'n a little drop of dew: jest pure common dew like what a person kin see any nice summer morning laying over the leaves and grass, and swinging onto the spider webs. That's what started the business, but mebbe even Tony wouldn't of been so reckless if there hadn't a-been so much spite work going on in camp. Aw, you know how it is, sometimes a camp'll all go right sour with spite. Every feller'll have a gredge erginst the next feller, and there'll be more mean tales passing from mouth to mouth behind hands than you kin shake a stick at. Every feller'll git so techy that if a person happens to say "Hand the biscuits" kinder short, 'stead of "I'll thank you for them sody biscuits, if you please," there'll be a fight and a sulk right that minute.

Well, that was what struck the Eel River camp whilst I was up yonder. Aw, I dunno how the thing come to pass: mebbe it was dog days, or mebbe

they vittles had kinder turned erginst 'em, anyhow every feller's temper was on a hair trigger, couldn't nobody open his mouth 'cept for a mean word, all the good healthy cussing and fooling had done went in the ground, and every job was tied up, 'cause there wa'n't no good fellowship to grease the wheels of work.

“What's the matter with this camp is that it's done froze up. What you-all need is somepen that'll git you above yerselves and thaw you out, so's you'll be running all loose and free ergin,” Tony says looking around at all them sour dough faces, with they under jaws set, and they lips pouting out. “And I'll jest have to figger out somepen that'll do it,” he says.

With that he goes off into the woods all to hissself, for Tony kin allus figger better when he's out in the deep woods all alone.

Well, the very next morning he was 'way off on the top of a high ridge all to hissself jest at sunup, when he ketched a wink from a little dew drop what was laying out there on a bunch of green moss. And seeing's he was all alone, Tony he winked back at the critter, for you know, stranger—you fellers what's reading this book—a person'll do a heap of nice fool things when there ain't any other feller round to laf.

Well, sirs! the minute he done that, it seemed like somepen inside him jumped up and hollered, “Dew drop! Dew drop! Look at it, you great big two-fisted Jim-bruiser, you ain't never seen a dew drop afore! Look at it! Look at it!”

Tony he did. He jest looked and looked at that dew drop with all the looks he had. It was filled with frosty light, and yit it had a rainbow in it too, and furst the sun would twinkle it on the one side, and then it would twinkle it on the tother. And all the time it kep' setting there so round and pretty, like it was the whole of creation, and knowed a heap more'n it was aiming to tell. That kinder made Tony mad.

“Hey! You doggoned sassy little cuss!” he bawls at it. “Don't you know I could bust yer head off with one finger?”

But the little critter didn't sass him back nor nothing. It jest kep' right on twinkling along there to itself, and the more Tony looked at it, the more awe-struck he got, for he seen he was looking right into the very heart of creation itself.

By now all the little birds had done chirped the sun up right high, and Tony tuck a great skeer that his little dew drop would melt. So all in a hurry he commenced plucking up leaves and moss to kiver it over. He worked like he couldn't work fast enough, and when he had it all safe, he was dripping wet, and panting like he'd run a mile—for you know a feller's bound to sweat if he aims to beat the sun.

Then, having got sorter acquainted with one dew drop, Tony commenced to see all of 'em like it was for the furst time. 'Peared like, everywhere he'd look the sun was winkling, and twinkling dew drops at him. Tony set there in a maze, jest fa'rly carried away with the sight, and seemed like he could hear every last one of them sparklers hollering out at him, "Brother! Brother!"

By now the sun commenced to lap them dew drops up off'n the leaves and spider webs, and all of 'em went like they was glad to go, hopping away into the sun like they was jumping into their daddy's lap.

About then a right peculiar thing come to pass. There was a little feller in camp what all the hands called Fiddling Jimmy, 'count of him allus playing tunes on his fiddle, and now as Tony set there kinder dazed, watching them dew drops hop off into the sun all so round and pretty, it seemed like he heared that little fiddler playing a tune somewhere right close. The tune it come nigher and nigher, 'til d'rectly Tony thought he was riding erway on it, like he was riding a saw-log down stream. But when the last little dew drop had hopped away to—well to wherever it is they does go—he found hisself still setting there with his mouth gapping open.

"Well, I will be dogged!" he says. "An' *that's* what happens every morning, and me never knowing it afore!"

Then he peeked down at the twinkle of dew he'd saved, and right that minute he knowed he'd ketched there a drop outer the heart of all the world, and that what was in it was the sap in him too, and in all the varmints and critters, and rocks and rivers, and green things in all creation.

When Tony bumped erginst that big thought he goose-fleshed up all over, for he seen he was thinking too wide, and in another pair of seconds he'd slip right out over the edge and be where—well it's the truth, I don't know where he would be! And Tony didn't know neither, but he give a powerful jump back in his mind from all that wide kinder thinking, and it seemed like he couldn't git back where other humans was fast enough. He stuffed his little dew drop into the bosom of his shirt, and lit out for camp so fast he fa'rly burnt the trail up behind him.

Well, when Tony hit camp, and smelled sweat and sawdust, it eased up that cold feeling down the spine of his back, and he ketched his breath, looking around for a good place to hide his dew drop.

He'd jest got it all kivered up nice under the roots of a white pine when he turns about and seen that little hand by the name of Fiddling Jimmy leaning up erginst a sapling looking at him.

Now there was somepen right peculiar about that little feller. He was mighty clear and wide betwixt the eyes, and had a look like he knowed a

heap more'n he could tell with his tongue, so he had to try to git it out by fiddling. Mebbe you remember me speaking of him when I furst hit camp.

Tony seen right off that the little feller sensed he'd been fooling with somepen powerful dangerous, so he lighted into him furst.

"Hey!" he bawls, "what in the thunder was you doing fiddling when every other hand was on the job?"

"Me?" says the tother looking s'prised.

"Yes, *you!* I heared you fiddling out in the woods this morning jest at sunup."

"Jest at sunup!" Jimmy hollers, pricking up his years mighty quick, and looking kinder awe-struck too. "Aw no, Tony, that wa'n't me. *You* know what it was."

"I'll be dogged if I do!" Tony answers him back.

"It was the *big music*," the tother says, letting the words slip out right soft and respectful like.

"THE BIG MUSIC!" Tony whispers, his mouth gapping open, and the goose flesh walking up the spine of his back ergin.

"Look a-here, Tony, you better tell me all erbout it," the Fiddler says mighty earnest and solemn.

And looking at him Tony seen he'd better. So he hands it all out to him, how he got acquainted with his dew drop, and how all at onced he seen dew drops and everything else different from what he ever had seen 'em afore, and then how the music come so close it seemed like he was riding erway on it.

"Tony, you'd better mind how you go looking and looking at dew drops, and hearing music jest at sunup," the Fiddler warns him, "or the furst thing you know you'll look a hole spang through to the tother side, and *then* the big music'll bust in on us sure 'nough!"

"Well, I wouldn't keer if the big music *was* to come!" Tony hollers out, looking powerful mad and dangerous. "Things has got mighty hide-bound and mean-spirited round this here camp, and you know there's a heap of spite going on. Mebbe if the big music busts in it'll kinder sweep things cl'ar ergin. An' anyhow," he lets fly at the Fiddler, "it ain't for *you* to talk! You been fiddling holes all round this camp ever since you struck it. Why look a-here!" he bawls jabbing his finger into the air. "Here's a place right this minute, where you fiddled 'My Old Kaintucky Home' what's so thin a person kin nigh run his whole hand through it. And what with you all the time playing 'Dixie' and 'The West Virginia Hills,' and all them other tunes, you got the whole place punched as full of holes as a porous plaster, and why we ain't had the big music in on us afore this is a wonder to me!"

“Well, if she comes, she comes! And *I* don’t keer!” the Fiddler says cutting a kind of a pigeon-wing.

“I don’t keer neither!” Tony hollers out, all fired up. “It’s jest the very thing this camp needs. And by the breath of the gray rocks, I’ll turn that there dew drop loose to-morrer jest at sunup!”

“*Jest at sunup!* Great Day in the Morning!” Jimmy busts out, his eyes dancing, and him dancing with ’em.

Well, now you-all kin easy see what sorter dangerous doings Tony and the little fiddler was up to that time. They didn’t say nothing to nobody, not even to me, but the next morning jest at daybreak, Tony tuck that powerful big cow’s horn of hisn that’s a whole sight bigger’n any natcheral born cow ever did have, and standing out there on a gray rock he blowed sech er blast it fetched every feller tumbling outer the bunk-house on the jump.

“Fellers,” says Tony looking mighty strange an’ tall in the gray light, “it’s glimmering for dawn, and I want you all to take a right good look at this little dew drop, and keep on looking at it when the sun hits it, for it’s my belief that not a one of you great big two-fisted Jim-bruiseurs ever really seen a dew drop afore.” With that he showed ’em the little critter still laying on its green moss, all so round and pretty.

Well, that sure was mighty reckless talk, and right that minute ole Preacher Moses Mutters, what’s allus sech a calamity hunter, tuck a powerful skeer.

“Oh, my *lands*, Tony!” he screeches out, “you’ll have us in every kinder trouble d’rectly! Do pray take keer!”

“Man!” says Tony, flashing a criss-cross look at the ole feller that twisted him into a corkscrew, “who ever seen *me* take keer?”

And it’s the truth, not a hand there had ever seen Tony take it.

Well, all us hands done like Tony told us to, and jest looked and looked at that little dew drop. And the more we looked, the more still and awe-struck we got.

Fiddling Jimmy had tuck a stand on a cliff er rock at the head er the holler, and he kep’ a-looking and a-looking off into the dawn, holding his riddle, and kinder stretching up on tiptoe like he was listening for somepen. Right about then a yeller strand of sunlight come wavering down the mountain and hit that little dew drop, and the little feller commenced to burn with a spark o’ fire, and while we was a-looking at it so awe-struck like, it burned brighter and brighter, ’til it burned itself right up into the sun and was gone. When that happened every feller there felt the stillness inside of him kinder bust wide open, and he knowed he was right on the edge of somepen powerful big.

Jest that minute Fiddling Jimmy, off on his rock, let loose with a powerful yell. "She's busted! She's busted!" he hollers. "*Great Day in the Morning!* The big music's busted through!" And with that he commenced to dance and to fiddle fit to kill hisself.

"Oh, my lands! Somepen terrible is coming!" ole Brother Mutters screeches out, flinging both arms round a right stout pine tree to kinder anchor hisself to the ground.

By now all us fellers could hear the strangest kinder music coming from 'way off yonder somewheres, and it looked like Jimmy's fiddling up there on his rock was kinder blazing a trail for that tother music to come in by.

Well, *sirs!* the next thing that come to pass, was a whole panel of rail fencing floating over the ridge and down the holler, like it was riding a river a person couldn't see. And *whoo-pee!* In another pair of seconds that panel busted itself all to pieces, and every last one o' them gray rails up-ended and commenced to dance, whirling around and bowing to one another, back and forth and hither and yon!

"O my lands! O my lands! Jest *look* at that now!" pore ole Brother Mutters bellers out, taking a strangle holt of his pine tree, with his hair all bristling up, and his eyes hanging out of his head.

The next thing that come was a fat old lady of a haystack dancing over the ridge and down the holler, bowing and kicking up, and carrying on like she was a two-year-old. And you better b'lieve every hand there made tracks to git outer *her* way in a hurry! Next there come the prettiest little pair of young maple saplings, skipping and dancing with they branches on they hips, and cake-walking along together jest as sassy as you please.

*That* was jest the beginning! In another pair of seconds the full tide of the big music busted in on us, pouring down the holler in a kind of torrent, like a river in flood. Every kind of a tune a person ever did hear, and every kind of a critter and varmint and growing thing dancing to the tunes, all of 'em wove together in the wildest sort of a jamboree. There was 'possums and rabbits and groundhogs, 'til you couldn't rest, and there was b'ars and wild cats in plenty too, and strange critters what never had been seen in these mountains afore. And there was trees and bushes and sawlogs and rocks, all jumbled and dancing together, and tunes—Who-ee! Every tune what ever was! A feller could see 'em as well as hear 'em, every color of the rainbow weaving in and out amongst all them dancing critters. Every varmint and critter there blowing along by them tunes was dancing and laffing fit to kill theyselves. A old she b'ar with her cubs come rolling and bounding in, doing a kind of a break-down along a little pink strand of a tune, and laffing so hard she jest natcherly had to clap her paws to her sides to hold 'em in place.



All a feller had to do was jest to jump into a tune and let it carry him on away. For when the *big* music comes it ain't like little musics, you don't dance *to* it, *it* dances you. And you'd *better* dance! For if you try to hold out erginst it, it sure will treat you mighty rough like it done pore ole Brother Mutters.

Well, all us hands in the Eel River crew, we jest let ourselves go to it, and one tune after another picked us up and swirled us off. And all the time Fiddling Jimmy was up there on his rock dancing and fiddling and singing like he was plum *distracted*.

The fellers they all tuck partners if they could find 'em, but if they couldn't they jest flapped they arms and danced by theyselves. The Sullivan feller picked him out a right stout saw-log, and danced so hard with it that the chips flew outer the log like pop-corn hopping outer a hot griddle. That little Eytalian hand, he found a monkey along of all the stream of foreign critters the music fetched in. They two sure was glad to see one another, and stepped off together to the strangest kind of a wild dance ever was seen up Eel River. I can't reely tell you what-all I danced with I was so busy watching the tother fellers.

But *whoop-ee!* I wished you-all could of seen Big Henry, doing the polka with that old lady haystack what come over the ridge at the start! Big Henry was sorter bashful at the beginning, but onced they got acquainted, they cert'n'y was dancers from Dancerville! That haystack for all she was right up in years, sure was a light stepper. And courtesy—Great Day! She'd draw off from Big Henry and bob right down to the ground and up ergin, and never drap a straw! Big Henry cert'n' was taken with her, and the last the fellers seen of the two together they was going on down the stream of music with Big Henry's arm around the lady's waist—as fer that is as it would go—and him talking matrimony to her to the tune of "I seen my lover go round the bend."

Tony Beaver jest danced with every last thing and critter that come by. Furst off he tuck up with a big gray rock what come footing it down the ridge early in the game. "Hey, brother! Fall to it!" Tony sings out, and they ketched aholt of one another some way, and had a high old time together. But it's the truth, that rock was so all-fired heavy every step it tuck it went down waist deep in the music, and splashed the tunes and songs up all over everybody like they was showers of rain. And having the music splashed over 'em like that jest sent every feller off dancing harder'n ever.

Well, Tony he danced with his rock a spell, and then he broke loose from it and tuck a whirl around with a whole string of little young squirrels, what come by all sorter strung together, frisking they tails and jumping and barking and cracking out jokes like they was cracked nuts. Then Tony he

tuck up with a field mouse and a hoppy toad, what was riding around together on the tune of “A frog he would a-wooning go.” And then he danced a spell with a dogwood tree what had all busted out in full bloom ergin, though its right time of flowering was over and done with nigh a month back. It sure was a pretty sight to see that tree all kivered over with its white blooms, as graceful as a young bride, with its branches waving and twinkling to the tunes. Tony he had it for a partner for a right smart spell, and after that he danced with any and every thing that come by, and between whiles he’d kick up high and low, and whirl round all to hisself.

But about then, that little boy what’s sech a great buddy of Tony’s got wind of the jamboree, and come a-running and a-limping into the camp as best he could on his crippled foot, holding out his hands and hollering, “*Take me! Take me, Tony! I wan’a dance too!*”

“*Sure! Come on, buddy! You kin dance to the big music with the best of ’em!*” Tony hollers back, ketching aholt of him, and yonder the two of ’em went off together, laffing and dancing, bounding, whirling around, and carrying on with every last tune in the bunch, and I’ll be dogged if that there little feller, for all his crippled foot, didn’t outdance the whole shooting match.

It sure was one of the *biggest* sights a feller ever did see, all them hands and critters dancing and laffing there together, with the pink tunes and blue ones and red and yeller, whirling ’em all about; and Fiddling Jimmy up there on his rock, fiddling and singing, and jest carried away in a kind of a glorification.

It was a funny thing what kind of a tune the different critters would pick out to be danced by. It’s like I say, when the big music comes it dances you, you don’t dance to it, but every feller’s free to pick his own tune. Take that string of thorn bushes now, the pretty little round kind that a person kin see most any time growing in a old run-out field: they come dancing in to the tune of “Here we go ’round the mulberry bush.” All they little leaves was winkling and twinkling and clapping theyselves together, and all of ’em was giggling out the prettiest little green giggles a person ever did hear.

It was all right for them bushes to pick a baby song like that, but it sure was a funny thing to see them powerful big steers of Tony’s jest natcherly carried away by the tune of “Bye Baby Bunting.” When it come by in all that tangle of music, them beasts they jest got right up on they behind legs, slung they tails over they arms and let it walse ’em away for mile upon mile. Them critters is so powerful and large that when they dances they tromples down trees and kicks great cliffs of rock outter the mountain side, and I bet “Bye Baby Bunting” never had no sech a swath cut to *it* afore. But pshaw! A person can’t never say *what* they’ll do when the big music busts in.

And it's like I say, when it comes you better mind and dance, or you're mighty apt to see the same rough time ole Brother Moses Mutters seen. That ole preacher, pore feller! He sure did set a great store by his soul, and he was allus powerful oneasy for fear it might git lost, and if it *was* lost what in the H—— Excuse me! What in the *thunder* would he have to travel on when he hit the next world?

So when he seen them rails dancing over the ridge, and heard the big music coming, he knowed they was in for somepen all outer plum with his kinder religion, and he ketched aholt of that pine tree like I said to sorter anchor hissself down, for he knowed dancing was a sin and powerful onhealthy for the soul. But pshaw! I tell you, you *got* to dance when the big music hits you! And try as he might that pore ole feller jest *couldn't* keep both foots to the ground at onced. Furst one little tune and then another'd come tickling round, and hist his leg up in time to it, and 'fore he could holler out, "*Aw my soul!*" and git that foot jammed down nice and pious to the ground ergin, here'd be the tother up in the air shaking a dance step to every jig that come by. It sure was a right pitiful sight to see that pore old feller hanging on tight to his pine tree, trying so hard to save his soul, while furst one leg and then the tother was danced out from under him, and waving up in the air like a cat shaking its foot when it steps in water. His ole buddy Ain't-That-So had been swept off by the tunes long since, for he ain't got the staying powers of the preacher.

But d'rectly his pine tree failed Brother Mutters too! Whoop-ee! When the full tide of that music come down the holler, that tree give a great heave and a bound, and busting its roots loose, it jumped up outer the ground, and commenced to toss its branches and to dance with the best of 'em, swirling pore ole Brother Mutters round and round with it, high and low, up and down.

Well, *sirs!* That ole pine it muster lost *its* soul long since, for it sure did take to dancing natcheral! And you better b'lieve it was a strange sight to see that tree dancing for all it was wurth, with the pore ole preacher feller dangling on to its trunk, his coat tails spread out right straight behind him, and him groaning and moaning over his soul. He didn't want to dance with the tree, but onced he'd got aholt of it, he was skeered to let loose. And looked like the tree didn't want to dance with him nother, for it jest turned itself loose and did every kind of a scan'lous worldly step a person ever heard tell of, fox-trotting and cheek-dancing with the ole feller 'til you couldn't rest. And every now and ergin if the preacher wa'n't mighty spry the tree'd tromp down right hard on his toes—and you all know a pine tree ain't got no light tread.

But after a spell the tree, it got plum *outdone* with sech a flat-footed, mean-spirited partner, and it give a great bound and a kick and slung Brother Mutters up to a high ledge of rock 'way above all that tide of music. After that the pine tree hucked branches with a red oak, and the two of 'em went down stream together kicking out jigs and cutting pigeonwings and dancing so hard the sap sweated out in great beads all over 'em.

Ole Brother Mutters, he lay up there on his ledge all tousled to pieces, yammering and moaning and panting out, "Oh my soul! *It's lost! It's lost!*" and peeking down over the edge at all that swirl of music and dancing down below, like he was looking to see where his soul had done went. The hands and critters what was dancing, they got pretty nigh tickled to death over the old feller and his soul, and 'fore they hardly knowed it, they was all dancing out a game, acting like they was hunting for the preacher's soul. They made up a little song, "Has anybody seen Brother Mutters's soul?" It went off real nice to the tune of "Has anybody here seen Kelly?" 'Course Tony Beaver, *he* had to start the thing. Him and his little buddy walsed over to Big Henry and his haystack, splashing the music up every which away as they come, and bows and sings out, "Has anybody seen Brother Mutters's soul?" Big Henry and his partner, they danced it on to that string of little young squirrels, Big Henry he bowed to the squirrels, and the hayrick she bobbed a courtesy to 'em, and both together they sings, "Has anybody seen Brother Mutters's soul?" The squirrels they jurked they tails and frisked and barked it out all up and down the line, 'til d'rectly the whole shooting match, hands and critters, trees, rocks, and varmints, was all doing the ladies' chain to the tune of "Has anybody seen Brother Mutters's soul?" all of 'em skipping and laffing fit to bust they heads off. It sure was scan'lous, but it's the truth when the big music is dancing you around, the thing that'll tickle you most is to have anybody think they *kin* lose they souls.

And all the time Fiddling Jimmy stood up there on his rock, with all that stream of music and dancing critters splashing and bobbing and whirling past him. One little tune after another'd come lapping up round his ankles, asking him to come on with it, but he jest kep' on where he was, riddling and dancing all to hisself, and waiting. And then, by and by, a wonderful big tune come rolling in, that was bigger and grander than any of us rough hands up Eel River ever had heard afore. It was all blue in the middle where the soft notes was, and pink up high, and way down gray in the low notes. It come in to a long thundering march, mighty solemn and beautiful, like the skies had opened and stood back for to let it come through, and like it was rolling outter the heart of all creation. Fiddling Jimmy, he tuck one look at that big tune and hollers out, "*Here I am!*" mighty high and joyful, like they'd been a-looking for one another since the world commenced, and with

that he jumped right out into the heart of it. The tune it never broke its stride, but it ketched the little fiddler up, and went on rolling away all so grand and beautiful. And all them other little tunes, they drawed up on both sides and all the dancers with them, making a kinder rainbow lane of sound, as you might say, for that big tune and the fiddler to pass down. After that—? Well, that was all. The minute that big tune passed away, all the rest of the big music sorter gathered itself together and blowed off to—Well, to wherever it had come from. The sound and the sight of it all died away; the hole where it had busted through closed up right tight; all the critters and varmints scuttled away into the woods, the trees jumped back into the ground, and in the shake of a lam's tail there wa'n't nothing to show for it all but jest a few gray rocks laying around outer place, a little dogwood sapling in full bloom a month outer season, a parcel of husky hands all outer breath, and ole Brother Moses Mutters still lamenting up there on his ledge. Fiddling Jimmy we never did see no more, but we didn't feel too bad about that 'cause the feller looked so all-fired happy when him and that there big tune ketched hands and danced off together thataway.

But every hand there felt mighty limber and free. All the meanness and spite work was clean swep' away, for we'd seen a dew drop for the furst time, and we'd danced to the big music, and we was all kinder stretched up above our common selves.

More'n that there was another grand big thing come outer it all. Whilst we was all laying round, sorter ketching our breaths, and feeling mighty friendly to each other 'count of all the spite work having clean blowed away, all to onced that little buddy of Tony's hollers out, "Aw, *look!* Look at *me*, Tony!"

And when we looks there was the little feller, running and jumping, and cutting up capers jest to beat the band, for I'll be dogged if the big music hadn't straightened his crippled foot all out, so's it was jest as limber and free as the tother.

"Aw, *look*, Tony! Watch me—*watch!*" he kep' a-hollering out, jumping and cutting up, and laffing all carried away with hisself.

Well, sirs! All us hands bust loose with a great shout at that, and Tony ketched his little buddy high up on his shoulder and went off into another wild dance, with the young-un setting up there, his arm hugged right tight round Tony's neck, kicking his heels, and singing out a little song, "I kin walk! I kin walk! Tony, I kin walk!"

For you see, strangers, that little feller had danced to the big music jest right. He hadn't helt back or been mean-spirited or skeered, he'd jumped right into the middle of it and let it dance him on away jest anywheres it pleased.

And that's what you better mind and do too. If the big music comes, you mind and dance to it, for if you don't you're mighty apt to git treated like it done Preacher Moses Mutters. That ole brother, pore feller! His coat tails was all tore to strings, his whiskers was raveled out, and it's the *truth!* he ain't had a sprig of hair on his head from that day to this—no, sir! *Not one sprig!*

And if any of you readers don't trust me and the lie-paper to hand you out the truth, all you have to do is to go up Eel River for yerself, and any hand there kin show you a kind of a crinkled place on the face of one of the highest cliffs up yonder, what marks the spot where the big music busted in—and *then* mebbe you'll know the truth when you see it!





## CHAPTER V

### MISS BETSY BEAVER

Now about *this* tale, I can't be right sure whether I got the rock-bottom truth of it or not, for the thing happened a right smart while back, afore I ever come up Eel River, and I jest have to take it the way the hands laid it all out to me. Being called the Truth-Teller, makes me mighty keerful about what I says, as I reckon you-all know by now, and if this tale didn't have Miss Betsy Beaver in it, what's jest about the most honest four-squar' woman I ever run acrost, I wouldn't take the fellers' words for it, but seein' s she's in it, I'll risk it for the truth—but *mind* now! I wa'n't no eye-witness of the facts myself—this is jest only what the hands tole me.

Doggone it! I wished I could claim kin with the Beaver folks! They cert'nly air a mighty onusual race of humans! There's Tony, of course, but then, too, there's his sister Miss Betsy Beaver what I'm aiming to make you acquainted with in this tale. Strangers—you-all that's reading this book—shake hands now with Miss Betsy Beaver, for she's jest about the nicest commonest kinder woman a feller ever did see. You-all knows the kind, jest going right along sewing on buttons, making griddle-cakes, and helping a neighbor out when the new baby's coming, feet squar' to the ground, right on the job *all* the time, and if there's any clouds round you better b'lieve Miss Betsy she ain't got *her* head up in none of 'em.

All hands up Eel River they jest thinks the world of Miss Betsy. She don't stay up there regular, but about once in so often she'll come by and git 'em all sorter straightened out—pants patched, kittles scraped, and all like that.

She sure is a mighty good-hearted somebody. There ain't a hand up Eel River what ain't had to thank her for somepen; and it's jest the truth, if it

wa'n't for her, I reckon them three pore doggoned pine trees, what Tony's allus been so mean to, would 'a' been skeered into turpentine long since.

You say you ain't heard of them trees?

Well, they's jest three right pitiful pine trees on a ridge up Eel River. They's all of a size, like they'd been hatched out the one cone, and all going up the ridge one right behind the tother. Well, some way them trees heard tell of what a powerful lumberjack Tony Beaver is, and ever since then they been a-running and a-running to git away from Tony. But course, all of you knows a tree jest natcherly *can't* run. So all them pore critters kin do is to kinder hunch up they backs, and strain and strain to bust they roots loose, and git on away. And there they been for a person can't hardly say how long, a-running, and a-running up the ridge, but never getting nowhere.

Well, them trees they jest erbout tickle Tony to death. He wouldn't really lay a finger on one of 'em, but he can't help fooling with 'em, and every once in so often he'll holler out to the hands, "Hey now, fellers! We got to git to work on them pine trees at sunup!" And at that the rosin it'll bust out over them trees in a cold sweat, and all night afterwards you'll hear the pore doggoned things crying and fretting, and shivering to theyselves, swishing they branches across they noses, and sniffing out in the kinder windy way a pine tree talks, "B-e-a-v-e-r, T-o-n-y B-e-a-v-e-r-'s coming!"

And Tony he's got 'em so skeered now, that he don't even have to *say* a word to 'em. All he has to do to make 'em sweat rosin is jest to spit on his hands, and roll up his sleeves right easy as he walks by 'em. And it's the *truth*, them trees they jest hates Tony so bad that if they ketches a sight of him way off on a far ridge, they bristles up they needles like you've seen a cat fur up its tail when dogs is about.

Miss Betsy now, she's mighty soft-hearted, so every night along about early candlelight when she's in camp, she'll slip out on the ridge, and sorter stroke them trees down, telling 'em Tony was jest fooling, and talking to 'em mighty motherly and nice, like she was tucking the kivers in around 'em and hearing 'em say they prayers. And the pore doggoned critters 'll quit shivering and sniffing, and dreaming turrible dreams about fresh chips and spilled sawdust; and *then* all night a person kin hear 'em whispering to theyselves, swishing out, "M-i-s-s B-e-t-s-y B-e-a-v-e-r's here! M-i-s-s B-e-t-s-y's here!" Like they was turning over in bed comforting theyselves. Them trees don't have much to do with this tale, I jest tole you-all about 'em to show you the nice kind-hearted sorter woman Miss Betsy is.

Tony, too, he thinks a heap of Miss Betsy; but course you-all know you don't never view yer own sister through no kind of a pretty haze like yer apt to see the tother feller's sister. And anyhow, Tony he's right sure that the real



*big* feller in the Beaver family has a T to the front of they names, 'stead of a B.

Still and all, he ain't fergitting that they's more'n one time when Miss Betsy's pulled him and the Eel River crew outer a tight fix. The time Big Henry cut into that sugar maple what was a bleeder, and come nigh drowning the whole camp in sugar water, it was Miss Betsy got things straightened out ergin for 'em.

Well, *sirs*, fellers! That sure *was* a time! And outer it too come one of the *biggest* eye-openers Tony Beaver ever got.

Big Henry now, he's jest a hog for tree molasses on his griddle-cakes, so one spring he sets out to tap the sugar maples round camp. But whoop-*ee*! He ain't notched more'n a couple, when he struck that one what 'peared to be a bleeder, like I said, and *swish!* the sap outer that doggoned tree, it squirted up pretty nigh fifty feet high! And in jest the shake of a lamb's tail, every hand there was wading knee-deep in sugar water.

It's the truth, that there maple had sunt its roots so all-fired deep it had jest natcherly tapped the res-e-voy, way, way down in the ground where the spring sap of all the trees is stored; and when Big Henry cut into it so keerless, it was like he'd yanked the plug outer the whole Atlantic ocean —'cept course this was sweet water 'stead of salt. And it was "Mind out, all hands, that yer don't git drowned!"

The fellers they rustled round in a hurry, and got a couple of ditches dug, and jest *did* git that turrible tide of water headed off into Eel River 'fore it washed the whole camp away. But that doggoned tree, it kep' right erlong spouting up day and night, night and day. It sure was a *turrible* e-vent, for let erlone stopping work, and putting everything under two feet of sugar water, it was wasting erway the sap from all the tother trees, and the whole forest got skeered for fear they was about to bleed to death, and sunt a delegation in to Tony to ast him please to stop the leak.

Tony now, course he hated mighty bad to have them trees all mad at him, so him and Big Henry tied ropes to theyselves, and swimmied out across all that torrent, and though they was swep' away a time or two, in the end, both of them being right stout hands, they got theyselves anchored, and chopped the tree down.

But pshaw! come to find out, that didn't do one par-tickle of good, for the doggoned stump, it spouted up worse'n the tree had done. It sure was a miserable cur'osity, jest setting there squirting up sugar water, day and night, night and day, leaking away the greenness from all the tother trees.

Ole Preacher Moses Mutters 'lowed it was the beginning of another Flood, and he was all for gitting the hands to work on a ark, thinking he'd be a second Noah, I reckon. But he oughter knowed he couldn't of got none of

them big Eel River Jim-bruiseurs into a ark, two by two, nor any other ways. And anyway, while he was searching the Scriptures, trying to figger out how many cubicks went to a ephod, and then devide them all by omers to git the measurements right, Tony got the flood checked up. He tuck a log chain, and after a right smart tussle, he got it fastened round that stump, and *then* he grubbed the blamed thing up with them powerful steers of hisn; and when the roots was busted loose, the flood quit.

Well, after all that big to-do, the hands they was pretty nigh wore out. So they wrenched the sugar water outer they shirts and pants, and kinder spread theselves out on the banks of Eel River to rest up and dry out.

But you *know* there ain't no rest to Tony Beaver! He jest shuck hisself off, more like some kinder wild varmint than a human, and then he commences to study on all of that maple sap. There was the river jest swimming full of it, from bank to bank, and end to end. It sure did look like a pity to have it go to waste, and all hands sech hogs for tree molasses too.

Well, Tony he studies a spell, and then he goes up stream to where he's got him a oil well, and not saying nothing to nobody, he pulled the plug outer it, and let a whole mess of oil run into the river atop of all that sugar water, and *then* he teched the whole blamed thing off with a match.

Well, *sirs!* I don't reckon there ever was sech a biling and a brewing! The whole of Eel River just bubbled and blazed and carried on somepen scandalous. And when at last the fires burnt out, and the smoke cl'ared, there was the river full up with tree molasses.

Tony he sure was tickled at his smartness *that* time. "Come on, fellers, and hep' yerself!" he hollers out. But pshaw! come to find out, them molasses they wa'n't no count for nothing. They was jest so rank with burnt oil, they wasn't even fitten for hogs, let erlone humans.

And it wa'n't no time nuther, 'fore Tony seen he'd got the whole outfit into a turrible fix. There was Eel River so stuck up with tree molasses from end to end that the waters jest natcherly couldn't run. The waters couldn't run, and course the logs couldn't travel, and there was Tony's big spring drive all tied up, and the river jest *ruined*.

And bees—Who-*ee!* every bee that was out that spring come a-hustling up Eel River with the ole lady and all of the kids. The doggoned critters was a-swarming, and a-stinging, and jest into *everything!* Every kinder bee that ever was! Why, they tell me they was even some of Paul Bunyan's bees come down from way up north somewheres, to git a taste of that sweetness. Paul Bunyan, he's that great lumberjack they tells so many tales erbout, a person would come nigh thinking he was Tony Beaver hisself. Them bees of hisn, they say, is jest the awfulest stinging critters ever heard tell of. Every one of 'em 's nigh as big as a ox, and Paul crossed some of 'em onced with a

gang of moskeeters, and ever since then, the doggoned cusses has had stings both before and behind.

Yes, sir! They sure was in a fix that spring! And Tony hisself jest *couldn't* git it figgered out how to cl'ar the place of them bees, and git the river to running ergin.

Well erlong 'bout that time, Miss Betsy she hit camp. She didn't take more'n erbout one look at Eel River all ruined like it was with tree molasses, and right black with bees, 'fore she hollers out, "My *lands*, Tony! Why in the name of common sense don't yer finish the job?"

"Finish the job?" Tony says, his mouth gapping.

"Why, *sure!*" Miss Betsy answers him back. "Here," she hollers, "you fellers jump round now, and run some more oil into that there river."

Well, all hands cert'nly was glad to have Miss Betsy take over the job. So they run the oil in like she said, and then Miss Betsy lighted the whole mess up once more. The river, she biled and bubbled and smoked from end to end ergin, but this time, when the flames died down, hold and below! all of that long sweetening had done biled down to short sweetening, and there was Eel River all froze across with maple sugar. All the hands had to do was to go out and chop the blamed stuff loose, and let the spring freshets carry it away, and jest d'rectly the water was running nice and free, with the log drive going down stream, and all of them turrible bees burned to death.

Well now, course that was pretty smart of Miss Betsy. But still and all it wa'n't much more'n what 'most any of the woman-folks woulder thought of—and anyhow, Tony was pretty nigh sure he'd of figgered it out fer hisself in another pair of seconds. So he jest kep' right erlong thinking of Miss Betsy as nice and common, and knowing that the real *big* feller in the Beaver fam'ly had a T to the front of they names 'stead of a B.

Course, Miss Betsy, *she* didn't think nothing 'tall of it. She stayed round camp for a spell, gitting things sorter straightened up, and speaking a kind word to them pore little doggoned pine trees; and then, seeing as how the traveling was good, 'count of the blocks of maple sugar still in the river, she borrowed a cheer and a ole quilt from camp, and had the hands to hook her in a good-sized chunk of sugar, and she spreads the quilt out on it, and setting down in the cheer, opens her ole umbrel'. A little breeze come erlong, and Miss Betsy floated on down stream jest as pretty and nice as you please, going down to the levels, where was a pore woman needin' her, with a new baby on the way, and no daddy there to do the gander walk, 'count of him having jest got kilt on a log drive. And as she floated on round the bend, the hands heard Miss Betsy singing a little song that went kinder this way—

“Make the beds, and mix the dough;  
Feed the chickens, and sew and sew;  
Tend the baby, and milk the cow;  
For a person’s job is here and now.”

Well, I reckon you fellers would of thought that was all of that, but it was outer all that big biling of tree molasses that Tony he got the great eye-opener I been promising you-all.

Course, that fire it was turrrible hot, and it burned or melted or busted everything it teched. Amongst tother things it melted a ole glass tickler laying alongside of the river where some feller had throwed it. There was a gray rock laying close to it, and when the flame come erlong that melted the tickler, it busted the rock too, and whatsoever was in the heart of that rock it got all melted up with the glass, and it sure did make a awful strange brew. Tony he found it laying there mighty innocent on the river’s edge. The glass had cooled off right thin like a window light, and was sech a peculiar color that jest outer pure idleness Tony picked it up and squinted through the blamed thing. And Great Day in the Morning! *he was a-squinting into the next world!*

Well, *sirs!* what Tony seen come at him so sudden it broke the breath right off short in his throat, and the hide all down the spine of his back kinder riz up in bristles.

He give sech a jump that the glass jerked outer his hand and busted itself up erginst a rock. But still there was a piece left big enough for a feller to see through.

Tony was all by hissself out there on the edge of Eel River. It was gitting erlong toward dark, and a ole bullfrog, setting in a puddle somewheres, was making a mighty big round, lonesome kind of a noise in his throat. Tony throwed a cat eye down at that there strange piece of glass, and then he looked all erbout him right easy—most ’specially he looked to the back of him. Then he glanced over toward camp, and it sure did supple up that stiff feeling down the spine of his back to see everything so nice and common over there. There was the good hot smell of sody biscuits and coffee; and there was Big Henry and the Sullivan feller in they blue shirts coming on down the ridge into camp, they axes over they shoulders, not keering nothing for nobody.

Well then, Tony he stoops over sorter stiff like, and picking up the glass squints through it ergin—and *there ergin was the next world!*

Well, of course I can’t say for *sure* it was the *next* world. It mought of been the world right to the back of this one, and then ergin it mought of been

two, three worlds on ahead. All I know for certain is it wa'n't no sorter world Tony Beaver ever had seen afore.

Course, all of you fellers knows there's kinds of glass that'll make little things look big, and tother kinds that'll make fur-away things, like stars, look close; but this doggoned glass done more'n that: it showed things what was right spang up erginst this world, but what nobody didn't know was there.

Well, Tony he helt it up to his eyes ergin, and jest looked *and looked*, with all of the looks he had. The last thing he recollected was hearing Jack Sullivan whistling "Sourwood Mountain" over on the ridge, and the next thing he knowed, Big Henry was shaking him by the arm.

"Hey, Tony, where air you! Hey, Tony! H-e-y, T-o-n-y!" Big Henry hollers, like Tony was fur away.

Big Henry's shaking him jostled the glass outer Tony's hand, so he sorter come back to hissself. And now the twilight was all gone, and seemed like it was way late in the night.

"Hey, Tony!" Big Henry says, still shaking him, and still hollering; "we been a-looking, and a-hollering for you half the night."

"Half the night?" Tony says, in a kind of a daze.

"Yes, sure!" Big Henry tells him. "Supper's done eat and over a whole while back."

"Supper?" Tony says, like his thoughts was coming through a fog.

"Yes, supper! *supper!* SUPPER!" Big Henry yells at him; for he's a hand what knows a holler to victuals will fetch a feller to hissself when no other word would.

Tony sets down on a stump kinder weak-like. "Big Henry," he says, speaking like he was at a prayer meeting, "I been a-looking into the next world."

"Come on back to camp, and sleep it off," Big Henry tells him. "You been a-drinking on a empty stomick." Only Big Henry didn't use no sech genteel word as stomick.

But Tony he fishes up that piece of glass, and helt it out to the tother feller—and in the end, it was Tony led Big Henry back to camp.

Well now, that was how the business commenced, and I tell you it wa'n't hardly *no* time 'fore the awfulest kind of a blight had fell over them hands up Eel River. There was all the spring jobs jest fa'rly hollering out to be done: tanbark to be spudded, logs on the skidways, and the drive jammed in the river. But in place of a camp roaring with work, there was jest a turrible sickly silence over everything, and a gang of half-starved fellers setting in a circle passing a little piece of glass from hand to hand.

Oh, don't ast *me* what the glass showed 'em, for I jest natcherly don't know. Not a feller there could lay out in words what he seen. And if he had been able to, I wouldn't of listened, for I know doggoned well it ain't for no common hand like *me* to go turning over the leaves thataway, trying to read the end of the tale 'fore time fetches it up natcherly.

And it wa'n't good for none of them Eel River hands neither. They looked and looked so hard through that doggoned little squint-hole, that they come pretty nigh looking theyselves right over the edge and into the next world itself. They jest honkered down on the river bank, passing the glass from hand to hand, licking they chops over what they seen, and every last one of 'em acting like a fool for want of sense.

Tony he let's 'em all look in turn, 'cept ole Brother Moses Mutters. That ole preacher feller had the next world all figgered out and lined off in his own mind so nice, with harpers harping on they harps, and all like that, Tony was skeered he mought be right badly upshot if he was to ketch a glimpse of what it was like sure 'nough.

So ole man Mutters was the onliest one of 'em all what had any sense left, and when he seen how it was working on Tony and all them tother pore fellers, he tuck his foot in his hand and put out after Miss Betsy Beaver, and fotched her into camp.

When Miss Betsy got there, she found that turrible blight over everything, with all of them stout hands so fell erway that they looked like a gang of razor-back hogs. There was they boots and shirts and pants, with the hide and bones still in 'em, but looked like whatsoever it is makes every feller a real human had pretty nigh oozed away into the next world, leaving them all jest sorter pitiful shells of theyselves.

Well, Tony he did have the sense to know Miss Betsy, and he holds out the piece of glass to her and says, "Hey, sis"! Look a-here!" with a kinder maudlin grin on his face.

But he wouldn't let the glass go outer his hand, holding it right tight while she looked.

"Well, what do you see?" he says, all swelled up proud like a toad, and waiting for her to git excited.

"I don't see nothing outer the common," Miss Betsy 'lows.

"Aw, sis', you air of the earth earthly, and jest natcherly *can't* behold celestial sights."

Tony had to swaller some after he got them big words out, for that was next-world talk that his tongue didn't come by natcherly.

"Tony," Miss Betsy says, "the sawmill's run down, the steers is loose and trampling up the whole world, and the logs is jammed in the river; quit peeking into the next world, and git on back to yer job in this one."

With that Miss Betsy tried to snatch that blamed glass erway. But, Tony he helt aholt of it for all he was worth.

So Miss Betsy let him be, and not saying nothing to nobody, she went on over to the cook-house. There she fired up the stove, and commenced biling coffee, baking biscuits, and frying meat. And all the while she sung a nice little song—

“Biscuits, and coffee, and bacon fry,  
Come on and eat a-fore you die.”

Well, sirs! it wa’n’t long ’fore the smell of all them good victuals come a-blowing down the wind to where them pore fools, what had pretty nigh oozed all away into the next world, was a-setting. Big Henry and the Sullivan feller was the first to git a whiff of the victuals. When that smell come to ’em they kinder come to theyselves and put they noses up in the wind like you’ve seen a hound dog do. And they snuffed, and they snuffed. And they hadn’t drawn in that good smell long ’fore they knowed there wa’n’t nothing in all the next world they wanted so bad as they wanted Miss Betsy’s sody biscuits and coffee right here in this. With that they kinder flopped over, scrabbled up on they hoofs and come a-loping to the cook-house, all lopsided and weak-like.

“Pore fellers!” Miss Betsy says, not even making ’em wash up nor nothing, but jest setting ’em down and pouring they coffee into they saucers for ’em. “Pore fellers! you sure ain’t ready for the next world *yit!*”

Miss Betsy keeps right erlong feeding ’em, and cooking, and singing—

“Biscuits, and coffee, and bacon fry,  
Come on and eat a-fore you die.”

And now, all mixed up with the smell of victuals and Miss Betsy’s little song, the tother hands could hear Big Henry and Jack Sullivan smacking they lips, rattling they knives, and lapping up they coffee, for they was hungry, and didn’t keer who knowed it. And at that sound, first one and then another of the other fellers busted loose from the next world, and come a-staggering into camp, yelping for grub like a hound on a hot trail; twill it wa’n’t hardly no time ’fore Miss Betsy had ’em pretty nigh all sung back home ergin, jest to the tune of sody biscuits and coffee.

But they was a few pore fellers so fur over the edge of the next world, that victuals couldn’t pull ’em back. And Tony he was one of ’em. So then Miss Betsy she went off on another trail, and sets all the hands to work what had been fed good. They was like folks come home from a far country, and

they was mighty glad to roll up they sleeves and git back on the job ergin, being jest natcherly homesick for the sound of a sawmill running, and the feel of a ax-helve in the palm of a man's hand. Jest d'rectly the whole camp was roaring with work ergin; sawmill sending up squirts of steam erginst the ridge, axes chopping, trees falling, and the fellers whooping and hollering, cracking jokes, and smelling all good and hot once more.

Well now, you-all know they is jest a very few hands, not more'n erbout one to fifty, say, what would rather work than eat; and them few pore fellers what was still stuck in the next world was this kind. Victuals couldn't fotch 'em, but when they heard the mill running, and the axes ringing and ketched a whiff of tanbark and sweat all sorter mixed up together, the sap of this world commenced to run through 'em once more. They staggered up to they feet, all dry and stiff-like; and sorter slow, and uncertain, like they was remembering somepen from away back yonder, pushed up they sleeves and spits in they hands—And *whoop-ee!* that was the charm that busted 'em loose, and set 'em right back ergin where they belonged.

All, that is, 'cept Tony. He did sorter raise up with the rest, but he was holding the glass at the time, and seemed like 'fore he could stop hisself, he tuck another big mouthful of the next world, and that turrible blight fell down over him ergin.

So now all the hands was home but Tony. Miss Betsy come on down to where he was setting and commenced to sing to him; but now her voice didn't hardly sound human no more. It sounded like wind swishing through the white oak trees, and water running in spring.

“Outer the earth come a red flower,  
Outer the earth come a blue;  
Outer the earth come rocks and rivers,  
And outer the earth come you.”

Tony sorter stirred when he heard that song, like somepen was hollering to him from 'way off yonder that he oughter know. But it come to him mighty dim and distant.

Miss Betsy she lays her hand on his arm. Miss Betsy's hand, now, it's right large and weather-worn, and looks like the brown earth itself. She went on a-singing to him in that curious voice that sounded more like running water and wind and birds, than it sounded human.



“Red flower, and blue flower,  
A-shaking in the breeze;  
And sap, sap, spring sap,  
A-running up all the trees.”

And now Tony looks up at Miss Betsy, with that dim next-worldness commencing to blow off his face, like mists blowing off a mountain ridge.

Miss Betsy’s hand slid on down and closed over hisn, while she kep’ on singing.

“They’s next worlds, and last worlds,  
And tother worlds maybe,  
But the green earth and the brown earth  
Is world enough for me.”

Miss Betsy’s hand closed right tight over that there piece of glass.

“Come on home, honey,” she says. “The spring’s done come, and the birds is singing.”

She looks down at Tony, and he nods back at her kinder faint-like. And right then and there Miss Betsy she pitched that squint-hole into the next world away over into the middle of Eel River, where couldn’t nobody ever find it no more.

And after that she tuck Tony back to camp, and fed him good.

Tony he eat, *and he eat*; and ’fore long he was all fed full, with the sap running through him good ergin, and powerful glad to be back where he belonged, with both feet squar’ to the ground, and the trees showing green erginst the sky.

Still and all, he’s got to show off some before his sister.

“I reckon you thought I was acting mighty strange, sis’,” he says; “but you don’t know what I was a-seeing through that little piece of glass.”

“Why, of *course* I know,” Miss Betsy says, going right erlong scraping up the dishes, and gitting ’em ready to wash.

“Aw no, Betsy, you don’t know what I seen,” Tony tells her mighty grand. “*I was a-looking into the next world.*”

“Why, cert’nly you was,” Miss Betsy tells him. “But I been a-looking there all of my life.”

“You what? What’s that you say?” Tony asts her, still too wropt up in his own grandness to sense what the woman was saying.

“Why, *my lands*, Tony!” Miss Betsy busts out like she was jest clar *out-done* with the feller. “Why, I was *born* seeing all them things you had to go peek through a little squint of glass to even ketch a glimpse of! And the

more I sees of the next world,” she says, swishing the yeller soap round in the hot dishwater, “the more I knows a person oughter git busy in this one.”

“Betsy! Why, *Betsy!*” Tony hollers so tuck aback he couldn’t hardly git his words out.

Miss Betsy quit swishing the hot soap-suds round, and rests both hands on the kitchen table.

“Tony,” she says, “look at me—look at me right good.”

Tony done like she said, and all to onced, right there in his own sister’s face, looking down at him over the rim of a common dishpan, it seemed like he could see all of them things, and more besides, what he’d been a-peeking at over there in the next world.

“Betsy! *Sister!*” he stammers out, all so awe-struck that he kinder hunkered right down on the ground at her feet, reaching out for to kiss her hand.

But at that Miss Betsy broke out in a laf, the strange tother-world look on her face wrinkled all erway, and there she was ergin, jest Sister Betsy Beaver, what Tony had knowed all of his life.

“Aw, Tony,” she says, “quit that foolishness, and take that dirty shirt off yer back so’s I kin git it into the washtub.”

Tony he lafs too, but he’s still mighty humble. “Well, sis’,” he says, “if yer won’t lemme kiss yer hand, maybe you’ll let me help you hang out the wash, anyhow.”

And *that’s* how Tony come to find out that the real *big* person in the Beaver fam’ly had a B to the front of they names, ’stead of a T. And when them three little ole pine trees got word of it all, they pretty nigh laffed theyselves to death; and all night long a feller could hear ’em whispering and swishing they branches together, snickering out, “B-e-a-v-e-r! M-i-s-s B-e-t-s-y B-e-a-v-e-r, fooled T-o-n-y B-e-a-v-e-r!” But mind, now, I dunno whether this tale is so or not—this is jest only what the hands tole me.



## CHAPTER VI

### HOG'S EYE AND HUMAN



Well, do you-all recollect me telling you right at the beginning how nigh I come to having my eyes jumped outer my head with s'prise the minute I got a good look at that path of Tony's? Well, it's jest the truth, things happen so all outer the common in Tony Beaver's log camp, that if a stranger don't mind out and hole his eyes in place they'll jest natcherly pop right outer his head with looking at all he'll see up there—yes, it's a fact I'm telling you!

One time while I was still up yonder, a right pitiful thing come to pass jest on that very account. There was a young feller come into Tony's log camp what had never been there afore. He was a good young man an' had been raised up real nice so he never teched licker ner chewed terbacker, ner cussed, ner nothing rough like that. He was kin to Brother Moses Mutters, that ole preacher what allus has had sech a turrible tussle saving the souls of them rough hands in Tony's crew. He'd worked so hard, and had sech poor returns, that at last he sent for the young feller I'm telling you of to come help him out.

Well, that young man, he come in all fired up with salvation, and expecting to save souls jest hand over fist. Pore feller! Little he knowed what *he* was heading for!

Big Henry and the Sullivan feller was the furst of Tony's hands to ketch a sight of him. They was out at the edge of camp lopping up a felled hickory, when all to onced they heard some one singing, and d'rectly here come that there young feller pacing down the trail to camp. He was all

rigged out in a black suit mighty nice and pious, with a hymn book held out in front of him, and every now and ergin he'd take a eyeful of words out of the book, throw back his head and beller 'em up to the sky. He come on looking and singing, looking and singing, in that kinder jerky way more like he was some kind of a machine 'an a human, and Big Henry and the Sullivan feller, they jest looked and looked with all the looks they had.

"'Tain't a real human," Big Henry says, slapping his hat back on his head, "but be dogged if it ain't the best imitation I ever seen."

"It sure is good," says Jack Sullivan. "I reckon it must be one of Henry Ford's new machines—ain't it a *sight* what that feller'll invent!"

The stranger was up right close to 'em by now, so he snaps shut his book, jerks it under his arm, and shoots out his hand to Big Henry.

"Good-evening-brother-air-you-saved?" he says like it was all one word.

"Hey! That's good! How did you git it to do that?" says the Sullivan feller, looking acrost at Big Henry.

"Darned if I know—muster teched a spring somewheres," Big Henry tells him.

"Make it do it ergin," says Sullivan.

"If I kin find the spring," says Big Henry, turning the young feller round, and making out like he was looking for somepen. "Do you reckon it's a self-starter, or do you have to crank the thing?"

"You got to crank it—this erway," says Sullivan, putting his fist erginst the young feller's nose, what was kinder large and anxious looking, and acting like he's grinding it round.

"It's good all right," says Big Henry walking around the stranger, and looking and looking. "I wonder have they thought of everything? Hey, have a chew?" he says, pulling out his plug of terbacker. The young feller sure was put to it to know what they was up to, but he runs true all right. "I thank you, brother," he answers mighty genteel, "but I do not use terbacker in any form, and I have never indulged in intoxicating lickers."

Big Henry and Sullivan fell back like somepen had hit 'em in the eye. "Oh, doggone it!" says Big Henry, "ain't it a *shame* to ruin a good piece of machinery like that! Any fool on the job could've tole Henry Ford not to put no sech words as them into the works if he was aiming to pass it off for human."

The young feller was gitting right oneasy by now. He swallowed some, an' his Adam's apple run up and down his throat like it was hunting a way to git out, and git on home. "I—I fail to understand you, brothers," he says.

"That's better," says Big Henry. "'I fail to understand you, brothers'—did you git what it said?"

“Make it say it ergin,” says Sullivan.

“No, let’s take it on back to camp and have some fun with the fellers. We kin easy make ’em think it’s human if we kin keep it off them fool words erbout terbacker and intoxicating licker. We better tote it to save the gasolene. You ketch aholt of its legs now——”

“Hold on, brothers, hold on!” says the young feller, backing back from ’em with his Adam’s apple running up and down worse’n ever, for he could see he wa’n’t heading for no easy ride. But jest erbout that time Tony Beaver hisself come moseying down the trail, and you better b’lieve Big Henry and Sullivan dropped the young feller in a hurry and made out they was working mighty hard, for they knowed doggoned well Tony don’t ’low no meanness to strangers in his camp.

The young feller picks hisself up and steps over to Tony. “Mr. Beaver, I b’lieve,” he says mighty polite.

Tony looks him all up and down for quite er spell. “Well,” he says, “it’s easy to see *you’d* b’lieve ’most anything.” Then he rounds on the tother two. “Hey!” he bawls. “Why ain’t that hickory lopped up by now?”

“Aw, we was jest killing a little time with the stranger,” Big Henry says, making the chips fly.

“Killing time was you? Then why in thunder ain’t you gathered it up? You know mighty well I don’t ’low no time killed ’round here less’n it’s gathered up and sto’ed away afterwards.”

That’s true too, for it there’s one thing Tony handles diff’rkunt from most folks, it’s time. He don’t never let what the hands kills go to waste. He has it all gathered up and put erway mighty keerful erginst the day they’ll need it. I dunno how the feller does it, but it sure is a handy trick, for if he gits into a push to finish a job, all he has to do is to fetch out a sack o’ time and, hold and below—the thing’ll be done an’ over mebbe a whole week ahead. An’ if any hand’s late for dinner say, he jest has to reach in his pocket and haul out a handful o’ time, and—*swish!* ’stead of being midday it’s sunup—a fact I’m telling you.

Yes, sir! It’s a handy trick all right, but jest the same it was right then and there all the trouble got started for that pore young feller. The minute he heard Tony tell the hands to gather up the time they’d wasted, his eyes commenced to pop, and when he seen them fellers running round doing it—and it’s the truth there was nigh a peck or so of it—his eyes got to bulging more and more, twill d’rectly when Jack Sullivan scoops up the last little five minutes what was hunkering down under a frogstool, *smack!* One of the pore feller’s eyes popped right outer his head like a cork outer a pop bottle! And *Great Day in the Morning!* ’Fore he seen it, Big Henry tromped down

on the thing, and mashed it right inter Kingdom Come! Yes, awful things happen jest that quick.

Well, sirs, all hands felt turrible bad at that. They gathered up the blamed thing, and tried to squoze it back inter shape, but pshaw! when Big Henry tromps on a person's eye, it jest ain't no more 'count for nothing.

The pore young feller sets down on the felled hickory, and ketched aholt of his head. "Don't let me see nothing more in this turrible place," he moans, "or I'll lose the tother eye."

Well, while they was all standing around mighty outdone and trying to figger out what was to do next—*pough!* they heard a gun crack.

"Oh my soul! What's happened now!" the poor young feller hollers, giving a great jump.

"Aw, that ain't nothing but the cook killing hogs," says Big Henry, ca'ming him down.

"*Thar now!* That's the very trick!" Tony Beaver sings out, hitting his pants leg a great smack. With that he put out for camp and was back ergin so quick a person couldn't hardly git out, "*Thar* he goes!" 'fore he had to holler, "*Here* he comes!" And dogged if he hadn't fetched a fresh hog's eye with him!

"Here!" he says. "If anything'll fit the hole, this will, for it's the truth a hog's eye is the nighest thing to a human eye there is." With that he h'ists up the young feller's lid, and pops in the hog's eye, and dogged! if it didn't settle into the hole jest as pretty as a bird on its nest!

"There now! That'll fix you fine," Tony says, all swelled up over his own smartness. "Don't mind taking it, son," he says, for he could easy see the young feller was mighty conscientious. "It ain't no manner o' use to the hog no more, and he'll be proud to pass it on to you." With that he ties up the young feller's eyes, and tuck him on back to camp. There he kep' him in the dark for quite a spell, twill the hog's eye felt as natcheral in his head as his own did. Then, mighty proud of hisself, Tony calls all hands together to see the great my-racle he's worked. Furst he onkivered the real eye, and that was still on the job, doing business jest like it allus had. Then he tied that up and onkivered the hog's eye, and darned if the young feller couldn't see with that one, too!

"Now then," says Tony, all wropt up in his own glory, "this is the furst time in history that a hog's eye has ever worked in a human head. It'll be somepen for you great Jim-bruiseurs to brag about seeing all the rest of your lives." With that he onkivers both eyes with a grand flourish, and all hands ketched aholt of their breath ready to bu'st it out in a great hullabaloo. But no, sir! Tony wa'n't as smart that time as he thought he was, for with both eyes open the feller jest couldn't see nothing at all. Leastways he couldn't

see nothing right. Everything was double or criss-cross, and every which erway, for it seemed like hog and human jest natcherly *couldn't* pull together. Tony was clean outdone. He turned the feller all erbout, hither and yon, and even stood him on his head for a spell, but nothing he could do could git the two shuck down so's they'd work together.

“Well,” he says at last, trying to make out like it was what he'd expected all along, “jest give them eyes time, and they'll pull together as nice as a pair of ole work horses.” But time didn't help none, for at the end of a right smart spell, hog's eye and human was jest as criss-cross with one another as they'd been the first minute they was onkivered. By then, too, it was plain to see Tony hadn't done that pore young feller no kindness, for not only his two eyes wouldn't pull together, but seemed like he was sorter busted in two hissself. When he looked through his human eye, he was jest like he allus had been, all sail set for salvation and mightily consarned about his soul. But who-*ee!* Jest let him squint through that ole hog's eye, and—well, he wa'n't like nothing he'd ever been afore!

Of course, anybody would know a hog don't view the world like a human. What a hog sees I can't tell you-all, for I jest natcherly don't know and you-all must know by now I ain't no hand to make up a tale and pass it off for truth. But though none of us Eel River hands knowed what he seen, and the young feller hissself couldn't—or mebbe it was *wouldn't*—tell, still and all, we could git a right good notion of what it was by the way he carried on—and it's a fact, plenty of the tother fellers 'lowed they wished they had a hog's eye tool

For one thing he allus favored his hog's eye when it come to eating time—and I wished you could of seen the vittles that feller'd put away then! And *drink*—well I'm for temperance myself, so I wouldn't whet your thirst by telling you what that young feller could pour down.

More'n that, with his human eye he was kinder soured against this world, for he knowed life was but a desert drear and heaven was his home, like what Brother Moses Mutters had tole him. But jest let him git his hog's eye open, and dogged if this world right here and now wa'n't all the heaven he 'peared to crave. His face got to changing, too. With his hog's eye open, it was twinkled up mighty cheerful; but with his natcher eye, it was all drooped down to a desert drear. It sure was pitiful to see a person busted clean in two that away! The fellers got to calling him all sorter fool names like Pig and Pious and Piggy Pi and all like that, 'cause they 'lowed half of him was pig and tother was pious. They even uster holler at him—

“Hey, brother, hey!  
Air you pig or pi to-day?”

Mebbe that sounds right foolish, but there was more sense to it 'n you'd think, for all us hands jest had to know which eye the feller was favering to know how to treat him. With his human eye open he was real nice and peaceable, and kinder timerous, but with his hog's eye open I never *did* see sech a feysty little cuss! He jest wouldn't take nothing from nobody, and was into every sorter scrap—why he'd even stand up to Big Henry then!

Well, finally, all hands in the Eel River crew jest got wore out having sech a miserable, busted-in-two human laying round camp, and they come to Tony and ast him please to straighten things out. They said they didn't have a thing in the world erginst hogs and course they didn't have nothing erginst humans, but half hog and half human was jest more 'n they'd stand for. Tony he 'lowed the onliest thing he could think to do was to bust out one eye, seeing as the two couldn't git on together.

“Which eye do you favor, son?” he asts him. “Will you be a hog, or will you be a human?”

Well, now, I reckon anybody would think the young feller would've spoke right up and said, course he'd be a human, but 'stead of that he puts his head in his hands and busts out with a turrible groan.

“It's awful to be a hog,” he says, “and yit someway I kinder like it.”

“Sure you like it!” says Big Henry. “Any feller 'ud rather be a hog than the kind of human you was. I cert'nly am sorry I never got really acquainted with that hog twill he was ham,” he says. “He sure muster been a regular, two-fisted jim-bruiser, for jest the little of him what's left has come pretty nigh making a real man out of a imitation.”

But ole Brother Moses Mutters, the preacher feller, was all tore up over it. “A hog!” he bellers out. “Do I hear a human being, the noblest work of God, saying he craves to be a hog?”

“You do, brother, you do,” says the young feller, all twinkled up, 'cause he was looking at the preacher outer his hog's eye.

“Ain't a hog a work of God?” says Big Henry, bristling up, 'cause he's sorter built on the hog plan hisself.

“Think, my brother! Think of your immortal soul!” the ole preacher hollers. “Shet up that wicked ole hog's eye, and open your right one, and you'll see that hell is lapping at your feet!”

“Ain't—that—so!” says his ole buddy.

The young feller opened his human eye, and all the hog twinkle went outer him, and he fell into a desert drear. “Aw, my soul! My soul!” he sniffles, shaking now more like the jelly for Sunday dinner than like a human.

“Hell is waiting for you, hell is gapping for you!” Brother Moses Mutters sing-songs out at him.



“Here, this ain’t no way to settle nothing!” Tony Beaver busts in, ’cause he seen the question was gitting too hot to handle, like any question what has to do with hell is sure to git. “Everybody simmer down now,” he says, “and let the young feller shet up both eyes, and think the thing out in the dark of his own head for hisself.” But that didn’t do no good neither, for when he set in the dark and studied furst on being a hog, and then on being a human, he jest *couldn’t* say which he favored.

“Well,” says Tony, “it is too much for one feller to settle all to hisself, so we’ll jest have to call a meeting and all hands take a vote on it.” The young feller was satisfied with that. “I’ll leave it to you-all,” he says. “If you decide I’m to be a hog,” he says, all twinkled up, “I promise you I’ll be jest the *best* hog I kin. And if it comes out I’m to be a human, why I reckon I’ll jest have to be one,” he says, preparing for the worst. So all us fellers seen whichever way the vote come out, we wouldn’t have no call to be ashamed of the young feller, for he sure was aiming to do his very best, hog or human. But it was a right solemn question, and Tony tole all hands they got to take a couple of days off to think it over. Well, if there’s one thing them Eel River hands hates worse’n another it’s thinking—it allus makes ’em sweat so bad. And the more they thought, the more kinked up their thoughts ’peared to git. They run the thing sorter like it was a campaign, and them two eyes was the candidates. Some fellers was for pig, and some was for pi, and some jest didn’t know *what* they was for.

Well, when voting day come round, all hands washed up and put on clean shirts, and some even went so far as to shave, but even *that* didn’t straighten out their thoughts none.

They opened with speeches and voted afterwards. Big Henry tuck the stand furst. Aw, he ain’t nothing but a right rough hand, with no flow of language at all, ’cept when it comes to cussing, but he knowed what he stood for and he sure did speak to the p’int that time. He h’ists hisself up on a big gray rock and commences, “Ladies and gentlemen——”

“They ain’t no ladies present,” says the Sullivan feller, acting smart, ’cause he was mad at not being ast to speak hisself.

“Nor no *gentlemen* neither,” says Big Henry, cutting a mighty dangerous eye at the tother, “but it’ll be best for all hands to act like they was. Ladies and gentlemen,” he sets out ergin, “I will be brief——”

“The briefer the better,” says Jack Sullivan, rolling up his sleeves.

“I will be brief, and say briefly I AM FOR HOG!” says Big Henry, and with that he makes one jump for the Sullivan feller, and the meeting comes to a halt twill they could get the two prized apart. After that ole Brother Moses Mutters tuck the stand. “Hell is waiting for you, hell is gapping for you,” he sing-songs out. Them words ’peared to be the key he wound hisself

up with, and in 'nother pair of seconds it seemed like the air was shooting blue blazes. "Don't you know," he bawls, "there ain't nothing in this world the ole devil loves better'n a human with a hog's eye. Oh, my pore brother! You air standing upon slippery steeps while fiery billows rolls beneath your unhallowed feet!"

"Ain't—that—so!" his ole buddy sing-songs jest like him.

Hearing that, all us hands went mighty weak in the spine of our backs, feeling turrible oneasy for the pore young feller. We could've stood it for him, mebbe, but d'rectly the ole preacher rounded on us too. "Cast your vote to make a human inter a hog," he bawls, "and the devil will shoot you all to hell on the same skidway!"

Well, sir! At that all hands sets up a turrible yammering, and sniffing, wiping they noses acrost they sleeves and hollering at Tony to let 'em off voting. Tony he jumps up on the gray rock and tells us all to quit that foolishness. Then he lays it out to us that the question wa'n't what would happen in the next world, but what was happening right here and now in this. "When he gits acrost to the tother side," he says, "the hog's eye will go on back to the hog where it belongs, and the human eye, what's waiting for him, will come on back to him, and the hog will be a complete hog, and the human will be a human, and," he says right sarcastic, "I reckon they'll know over *thar* how to handle the two of 'em, without no help from the Eel River crew. You all leave the next world alone and try to fix things up in this. If you think he's a better hand as a hog—" (*"He is!"* Big Henry bawls) "then vote for hog. And if you think he's better as a human—" (*"He ain't!"* Big Henry bellers) "then vote for human, but for the world's sake, git it settled one way or tother."

But doggone it! When they tuck the vote it come out a dead tie, so there we was all sweated up for nothing and no nigher to settling the thing than we was afore. The ballot was a secret one, so don't nobody know to this day which way I voted—and I don't aim to tell it now. The pore young feller was nigh distracted. He couldn't make up his own mind, and now seemed like the fellers couldn't make it up for him. "Oh, *can't* you git both eyes to pull together?" he says to Tony. "*Course* I don't want to be a out 'n out hog, but seems like if I could jest keep a little dash o' hog, I'd be a better human."

"Ain't that the truth!" says Big Henry.

"Well," says Tony, "I reckon you're right, for you sure was mighty soured on the Lord's pretty world 'fore that ole hog opened your eye, as you might say. There's jest one thing that'll mebbe git them two eyes satisfied with one another, but you'll have to give me time to fix it up."

“All right, I’ll leave it to you,” says the young feller mighty trustful. So all us hands lef it to Tony, and the young feller kept right on like he was half hog, and half human, and nothing didn’t happen for quite a spell.

Well, there was a widder woman living not far from camp. She had a whole parcel o’ mighty fine young gals what she was aiming to raise up nice. One day, the young feller seen two o’ them gals coming along the trail to camp with their mammy, and you better b’lieve he opened both eyes, hog *and* human, for they sure was somepen to look at. It seemed like they was all jest out for a little stroll and happened by camp jest to say howdy to Tony. Tony was mighty nice and polite, like he allus is with ladies, and d’rectly he hollered for the young feller and made him acquainted with ’em all. The gals sure was interested in him ’count of his two eyes. They made him open first one and then the tother and ast him all sorter questions. The young feller sure liked the way they looked at him. It made him feel all swelled up, like a mighty big Mister Somebody.

“I reckon I must be the onliest man in the whole world with a hog’s eye in his head,” he says, kinder strutting round inside of hisself.

“I reckon you air,” says one o’ the gals, looking mighty big eyed at him.

“But that ain’t so outer the common, for most men folks has somepen of the hog about ’em,” the tother gal says mighty up and coming, her tongue being right quick on the trigger. But though the young feller showed off and tole the gals a heap, there was one right strange thing he never let on about, and that was that when he looked with his hog’s eye he could only see one gal, and when he looked with his human, he could only see tother. It was jest when he looked with both eyes he could see the two of ’em, and that didn’t do him no good for, course, then he seen everything topsy-turvy, double, and ever’ which way.

The women folks didn’t stay long, but after that you jest couldn’t keep the young feller outer the holler where them gals lived at. They sure treated him nice, too, and it would o’ been all right if he could of jest got the gals straightened out, and been able to see ’em both at onced, so’s he could rigger out which one he favored. They looked enough alike to be twins, but they sure was different in character. The one he seen with his human eye was mighty sweet and quiet, the kinder gal a man could put his trust in; but the one he seen with his hog’s eye was all for laffing and dancing—mighty fly-up-the-creek and gay. The first was the gal his Mammy would’ve liked to see him marry, but the tother was the one he would o’ liked to marry hisself. Still and all, he was mighty taken with ’em both. So there he was, the pore feller! in a worse fix’n ever. He not only couldn’t git hisself straightened out, but now, doggone it! he’d fell in love with two gals at onced! And even with his hog’s eye open, he knowed he couldn’t marry ’em both.

Well then, after a right smart spell o' that, there come a mighty pretty spring evening, when it seemed like the daylight jest *couldn't* take itself away. All hands was laying around on the grass after supper, kinder tasting over how hard they'd worked, feeling mighty proud and satisfied, and liking the whole world. D'rectly they all heard voices, and when the young feller looked, he seen the widder woman and them two gals coming along down the trail to camp. As he watched them gals stepping along and stepping along, over the grass and little gray rocks, with their skirts swish-swashing at the branches alongside o' the trail, somepen 'peared to bust wide open in him, and it seemed like they was walking down to him right out o' creation. But still for the life of him he couldn't tell which one was hisn.

The tother fellers all jumped up, brushed theyselves off, slicked theyselves down, and 'lowed it was jest the very evening for a dance. So Tony fetched out his Jew's harp, and commenced picking out a mighty lively little tune, *Plinketty-plink! Plunk! Plink! Plinketty-plunk*. All hands made a rush for the gals, but the young feller seen with his human eye that one of 'em wouldn't dance, but when he looked with his hog's eye the tother was dancing fit to kill, swinging away with first one hand, and then another. The pore young feller set down on a log feeling mightily outer it, and scan'lized too, for he'd been raised to think dancing was a sin. With his human eye he seen the quiet sister not fur off a-looking at him mighty close and cur'ous. Somepen in him wanted to go set 'longside o' her, but somepen else in him wanted to dance with the tother so bad, he jest had to shet up both eyes and take a strangle holt on his soul for to save it.

All the time he was setting there Tony kep' a-picking on his Jew's harp, and that wicked little *Plinketty-pink! Plunk! Plink! Plinketty-plunk!* run all 'round in the dark of the young feller's head like a flash o' quicksilver, making his soul jest natcherly scratch gravel to git erway from it.

D'rectly he sensed all hands had quit dancing and was standing 'round him, kinder holding themselves together like there was a big laff coming, and they was waiting for it to bust.

The young feller peeps up with his hog's eye, and there was the lively sister standing in front of him holding out her pretty hands.

"Come on, dance, honey," she says mighty soft, and *Plinketty-plink! Plunk! Plink! Plinketty-plunk!* Tony's harp says mighty gay and wicked. All hands was patting and stomping, and that little tune did h'ist the young feller half way up on his feet, but then he bust out, "Aw my soul!" and flops down ergin. "Where's yer sister?" he asts the dancing gal, mighty desperate, and hoping tother would save him.

"I don't see her nowheres," she says, making out she was looking all round, and at that all hands come nigh busting the sky wide open hollering

and laffing.

The young feller opens his human eye, and right there was tother gal standing near by, not saying nothing, but still looking at him mighty close and cur'ous, and like she was waiting for somepen.

“What about my soul?” the young feller bawls out to her, for some way she seemed more like his Mammy than his sweetheart.

“What about yer *heart*?” she shoots right back at him, not stirring a finger and still waiting and watching.

Well, it was plain *she* wa'n't going to turn her hand over for him—ain't it a sight the way gals will treat a pore feller! So he shets up his human eye and looks with his hog's, and there was the tother sister still holding out her pretty hands to him.

“Honey, I'm a-waiting,” she says.

*Plinketty-plunk! Plink! Plunk!* says the tune.

Well, sirs! the young feller jumps up to his feet, and lets fly the awfulest words he ever had spoke. “*Doggone* my soul!” he hollers. With that he ketches aholt of his gal, and the two of 'em went dancing away, climbing up that little tune, like they was climbing up the golden stairs, and every step was *Plinketty-plink! Plunk! Plink! Plinketty-plunk!*

All hands sets up a turrible shout, and ole Brother Moses Mutters fell over like he was dead, but them two kep' right along dancing up the golden stairs, twill fin'ly Tony Beaver quit juicing on his Jew's harp, and then seeings as, there wa'n't no more *Plinketty-plunks* to climb, they landed back on earth ergin.

“Come on now!” the young feller hollers out, holding on to his gal, and all fired up. “Soul or no soul, I'll take the hog's eye! So come on, fellers, an' bust out the tother!”

But at that the gal flings her arms round his neck right tight. “Hole on, honey! Hole on!” she says. “I don't want 'em to do nothing to you!”

“But I can only see you with my hog's eye,” he tells her.

“But I dunno's I want a hog for a husband,” she says. “An' anyhow, what erbout yer soul?”

The young feller looks down at her, and all to onced somepen 'peared to bust in his head. “Honey!” he says, “*I've done found it! Dogged* if I didn't find my soul for the first time in all my life when I lost my heart!”

At that the gal give a kind of funny laff what had a ketch in it. “That was all I wanted yer to know, honey,” she says, looking at him mighty wise and deep, more like she was his mammy than his sweetheart.

“*When yer lose yer heart, yer find yer soul!*” the young feller kep' saying over, like big news had struck him.



“Boy,” says Tony Beaver, “them’s the first real words you’ve spoke since you hit this camp. That soul o’ yourn never was wurth the powder to blow it off er stump twill right this minute. Open both eyes now. Mebbe I got ’em fixed so’s they’ll pull together at last.”

So the young feller opens both eyes, and looks erbout, and d’rectly he bawls out, “I kin see! I kin see jest fine! Hog and human’s pulling together all right!”

“Then look at yer gal! Look what you’ve done ketched!” all hands yells at him, haw-hawing, slapping they pants legs and carrying on fit to kill. The young feller looks down, and hold and below! There he was hugging both sisters, for they was one and the same gal, and had been all erlong, only course when his eyes was criss-crossed they looked like they was double.

“Have I got yer both!” he hollers, all dumb foundered.

“Yes, honey,” the gals say to him. “You’ll jest have to take us both, for I reckon I’m what all gals air, part angel and part human, and less’n you take us both, you’ll never keep them two eyes working right, ner see the world straight.”

Well, sirs! After that, looked like the young feller was balanced jest right, for he had enough hog in him to be human, and enough human to hole the hog down, and thataway he come to be jest the finest preacher all up and down Eel River, and cl’ar out inter the Levels.

It’s the truth, I’ve heard him preach myself.

And *that’s* the whole er that,—lock, stock, an’ barr’l, hog’s eye and human!



## CHAPTER VII

### THE WORLD'S FUNNY BONE

Did any of you folks what's reading this book ever hear tell of that great lumberjack, Paul Bunyan, what lives up North somewheres? They say that feller kin burl a log so fast he'll skin it clean outer its bark, and then run to shore on the bubbles; and in his camp they uses a holler tree for a dinner horn—he sure must be a regular two-fisted Jim-bruiser of a feller, and I'm aiming now to tell you-all about the time him and Tony Beaver met up right face to face. That sure was somepen to see, and I'm mighty glad I was there to see it. Out of it too come the biggest kinder eye-opener for Tony and Paul both.

The first news us fellers in Tony Beaver's crew had of Paul Bunyan was one time when a strange logger come by the Eel River camp singing a little song—

“Paul Bunyan growed a mighty tree,  
Its branches scratched the sky;  
And when he felled the doggoned thing  
It ripped a hole on high.”

“Hey, stranger!” Big Henry yells at him. “That song's all right, but you got the names twisted. It wa'n't no Paul Somebody growed that tree; it was Tony Beaver hissself, and well I recollect the time.”

“I never heard tell of no Tony Beaver,” says the stranger, “but Paul Bunyan I know well, being one of his hands in the Big Onion Camp. In Paul's camp now,” he says, setting down on a stump and biting him off a big chaw of terbacker, (you-all mind what I tole you right at the beginning, the

bigger the chaw, the bigger the lie?) “they got a griddle for frying the batter cakes the fellers eats so big that the onliest way they kin grease the thing is to have six men skate over it with a slab of fat meat on each foot.”

“Welcome to Eel River!” says Big Henry. “It’s right here in Tony Beaver’s camp you belong—only first you got to git them names straight.”

“I hate to git things wrong,” says the stranger, looking like he was doing his best to hit the truth; “and it’s a fact I made a slip when I said Paul Bunyan needs six men to grease that there griddle. It’s really eight he uses, and in a pinch I’ve seen as many as ten or twenty hands skating over it, with them slabs of bacon on they feets. It sure is hot work for the fellers! Every slide they make they leave a trail of smoke behind ’em, and they have to keep stomping they feet *all* the time to stomp the flames out.”

“Look ahere, stranger, didn’t you hear me say that was Tony Beaver you was talking erbout?” says Big Henry, gitting mighty restless.

“Paul Bunyan is the man I’m speaking of,” says the tother, buttoning up his mouth in a right stubborn way.

“That’s a—” says Big Henry, and sidesteps. “That’s a—” he says ergin, riding right up to the word and jumping off jest in time.

“If the word yer aiming at is ‘lie,’ hit it!” says the stranger, standing up kinder dangerous.

“Well,” says Big Henry, knowing he has to be polite to company, “we don’t have to *say* nothing erbout lies in this camp, for Tony Beaver’s got a trick for ketching ’em. He’s invented him some sticky lie-paper that ketches lies as fast as fly-paper ketches flies. Hey! Truth-Teller! Fetch out yer lie-paper!” he hollers at me.

I come a-running with the thing, and Big Henry and me swishes it all erbout in the air where the stranger’d been talking.

“Here, now, we’ll jest see what’s what!” says Big Henry. But no, sir! We didn’t ketch nary ernother lie.

“Hey! Looks like I’ve been telling the truth all erlong!” says the strange hand, kinder tickled, and some s’prised too. “Or else somepen’s the matter with the paper—mebbe you fellers in this camp has sorter overworked it.”

“Somepen’s wrong, sure,” says Big Henry, mightily outdone. “There, now!” he says, looking down the trail. “Here comes ole Preacher Mutters! He’s got all kinds er book sense if he ain’t got no other kind. Mebbe he kin straighten things out. Hey, Brother Mutters!” he bawls. “Did you ever hear tell of a feller by the name of Paul Bunyan?”

The ole preacher claws his fingers through his beard for a spell, looking as earnest as a billy goat. “It’s *John Bunyan* you mean—him as writ that holy book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*,” he says, rolling back his eyes, and



tipping up his chin to let them pious words trickle down his throat, like a ole hen drinking.

“That’s news to me,” says the stranger. “Paul mought of had a brother by the name of John, but I never heard tell of him. The Bunyan I’m speaking of,” he says, gitting into his stride ergin, “has the biggest bees a feller ever did see. Each one of ’em’s big as a full-grown ox, and Paul crossed ’em a while back with a gang of moskeeters, and the offsprings of that wedding is the awfulest critters a person ever did see, for they has stings both before and behind.”

“That sure don’t sound like nothing I ever heard tell of *John Bunyan*,” says the preacher, shaking his head mightily mystified.

“Looks like the bunion’s on the tother foot, then,” says the stranger, acting smart.

“It ain’t no Paul Bunyan, ner no John neither—it’s Tony Beaver! And I’m here to tell the world so!” says Big Henry, jumping up.

But it was the stranger got in the furst lick. “*Paul Bunyan!*” he says, putting his fist in the word, and landing it on Big Henry’s jaw.

“*Tony Beaver!*” Big Henry bellers back, placing his name on the tother’s nose.

“Hol’ on, brothers! Hol’ on!” the preacher bellers, reaching out and trying to peacify the two. But pore ole feller! *Bang!* he got a *Paul* on the side of his head, and *Biff!* a *Tony* tuck him in the chist, bowling him over flat on the ground with the wind knocked outer him.

He lay there for quite a spell gaping up at the sky. “No,” he says at last, kinder talking to hisself. “No, that Paul Bunyan surely ain’t no kin at all to John.”

But jest erbout then Tony Beaver hisself happens up on the scene, toting that little boy on his shoulder what’s sech a great buddy of hisn.

The little feller kin walk all right now since that time his crippled foot got supplied up dancing to the big music, but all the same he ain’t going to give up his seat on Tony’s shoulder to nobody.

“Here, now! Here! What’s all this erbout?” Tony hollers. With that he scoops ole Brother Mutters up offn the ground, steps right in betwixt the two fighting fellers, and had everything ca’med down jest in no time.

“But look ahere, Tony,” says Big Henry, still all worried up. “Here’s a strange hand telling some of your doings, and tacking ’em all on to a logger by the name of Paul Bunyan—or mebbe his furst name’s John.”

“No, *sir!* It ain’t John Bunyan!” says Brother Mutters, feeling hisself all over to see was he fatally busted.

“I wished you-all could see that blue ox, Babe, of Paul’s,” says the strange hand, going right erlong like nothing hadn’t happened. “He

measures all of forty-two axe handles and a plug of terbacker acrost his forehead—forty-two, that is, of Paul’s axe handles; that ’ud be erlong erbout one hundred and seventy-five of any common hand’s. An’ his nose is so fer away from his years he can’t hear hisself snort.”

“Well, *that* ain’t nothing,” chips in the young-un setting up on Tony Beaver’s shoulder mighty proud, for he jest thinks Tony Beaver makes the world go round, and measuring it all off wide with both arms. “Tony, he’s got him a yoke er steers so big it takes a crow a week to fly betwixt the horns of one of ’em.”

“Shake, young feller,” says the stranger. “If yer needing a job, I’d be glad to take you up to Paul; he’s looking for stout hands like you right this minute.”

“I thank you,” says the little feller, all swelled up, “but I got jest erbout all I kin han’le right here he’ping Tony out.”

“I’ve heared tell of that Paul Bunyan afore now,” says Tony, scratching his year more like he was some kinder varmint than a human. “If he’s the great logger you say he is, tell him to come on up Eel River, and him and me’ll have a contest and find out which is the best feller.”

“That’s the *very* trick!” Big Henry hollers out.

“All right, I’ll take your word to Paul—*he’ll* show you-all somepen,” says the stranger, laying back his years, and making ready to shoot for his own shanty.

“Tony Beaver’ll show *him* somepen!” the little feller hollers after him, cocking up his head, flapping his arms and crowing out “Err—erk—Err—erk—Err—*Rooooo!*” like that joky feller in camp has learned him to.

Well, it wa’n’t hardly no time after that ’fore Paul Bunyan come up Eel River with a whole parcel of hands from his camp. There was Charlie the Swede, Big Ole, and a whole heap more, besides Johnny Inkslinger, Paul’s timekeeper, with his fountain pen as big as a saw-log—no, I dunno’s it’s quite *that* big—I got to recollect I’m the Truth-Teller.

Well, sirs! When they met, Tony and Paul sure did set a swift pace in manners!

“Welcome to Eel River, Mr. Bunyan,” says Tony.

“Pleased to meet you, Mr. Beaver,” says Paul. “Me and my crew put out from the Big Onion camp the minute I got your word, but mebbe I’m a bit late gitting here. What’s the time?”

“It’s any time you say, Mr. Bunyan,” says Tony.

“How’s that, Mr. Beaver?” says Paul.

“Jest like I say—name the time you want, and it’s yourn.”

“Well, I *was* aiming to hit your camp at sunup, but now looks like it’s nigh midday,” says Paul.

“Sunup she shall be!” says Tony. With that he reaches in his pocket and hauls out a handful of time, and *swish!* thar she was right back at sunup ergin, with the dew fresh on the grass, and all the little birds chirping up to sing.

“That’s a mighty handy trick,” says Paul. “Inkslinger, make a note of that.”

The timekeeper laid aholt of his pen, and the scratch-scratching of it was like a million katydids ripsawing on they hind legs in fall weather.

“We had bad luck with the time in our camp the winter of the blue snow,” says Paul. “There was mighty little forage that year, and Babe, that ox of mine, busted into the granary where the time was kep’ and chawed it all up ’fore we could make him quit—all, that is, ’cept the leap years. Even Babe couldn’t stomick *them*.”

“My time is yours, Mr. Bunyan. Jest help yerself; take right smart, take darned nigh all,” says Tony, showing his manners.

“I thank you,” says Paul. “I fetched you a present of a couple of my bees. The pair of ’em’ll make you along about twenty tons er honey a month. Here, Ole! Fetch up them bees!” he hollers out.

Big Ole brung the bees up, and I wished you could er seen ’em! Each one of ’em was as big as a ox, and they was loaded down with log chains to keep ’em from flying erway.

“We had ’em check they stings with the timekeeper while we was traveling,” says Paul. “But Johnny Inkslinger’s got ’em all labeled which ones goes behind and which before, and kin slip ’em right into place whenever you say.”

Tony casts his eye over ’em, and they sure did give him back a mighty mean look, with both of ’em buzzing like a sawmill cutting through white oak.

“Well,” he says, “let’s git better acquainted afore we give ’em back they weepens.”

After that the stunts betwixt Paul Bunyan and Tony Beaver commenced. But pshaw! It looked like there wa’n’t a pin to choose betwixt the two of ’em. If Tony Beaver tore a white oak up by the roots and pitched it acrost Eel River, Paul Bunyan’d pull up a red oak and toss it over the ridge. And if Paul set the calks of his boots nigh fifty feet up in the face of a cliff, Tony’d jump across Eel River and back ergin and never tech ground on the tother side. So there they was—pull Dick, pull Tom—wasting a lot er sweat and nothing gitting settled. But d’reckly all hands got to noticing that that little boy belonging to Tony’s camp kep’ a-hollering all the time for Tony no matter which feller done the trick. “Aw, look at Tony Beaver jumping acrost

Eel River! Aw, look at Tony stomping his boots up yander on the rocks!" he'd holler.

That made Paul's hands kinder mad. "Look ahere, young feller, your man ain't doing it all! That was Mr. Bunyan what set his calks in the face of the cliff," Big Ole tells him.

The little feller looks at him kinder big-eyed and s'prised, and then he says, "Aw, you fool me!" an' kep' right erlong hollering "Looky! Look at Tony!" for everything that happened.

But Paul hisself didn't git mad. He looks at the little feller for a spell, and then he throws back his head and busts out with a great big round "Haw, haw, haw!"

"What's hitting your funny bone, brother?" Tony asks him, for by now the two of 'em was gitting mighty thick.

"There's a big laf coming from somewhere's," says Paul, kinder sniffing up the air like he was a hound dawg. "I can't tell where it's heading from, but when she busts she sure will be a big one. I'm funny that way," he says; "I kin sense a joke and commence to laf when it's still all of ten miles off—be damned if I can't! *Aw—oh!*" he says, clapping his hand to his mouth, "I didn't go to let that word fly out before the little feller!"

"Take it back then, brother!" says Tony.

"How kin I? I spit that word out so hard it's nigh half a mile down the skidways of the past by now."

"I kin git it back for you!" says Tony, bawling to his hands to fetch him around his riding horse.

Now that nag of Tony's sure is swift, but it ain't so much its swiftness that's peculiar as it's the way they got him saddled. Tony had a chore boy in his camp a while back what appeared to be jest a fool for want er sense, and one time the feller fetched the horse round with the saddle facing the tail. "I saddled him thataway so's you kin ride both going and coming," he says, his mouth gaping open at his own smartness.

"Well, there ain't one grain er sense to that," says Tony, "and jest for that very reason I b'lieve it's true." With that he jumps on the beast, and dogged if he couldn't do jest like the fool said, ride both going and coming. It sure is a swift way er traveling, and the onliest way I know of that a person kin be in two places at onced.

Well, Tony jumps on his beast now, and takes out *pluckety-pluck* after that cuss word Paul had let fly. Riding thataway, it wa'n't hardly no time 'fore he come up with it. But course I don't have to tell none er you-all that if there's one thing a cuss word hates worse'n another it is to be taken back once it's loose. So, with Tony right atop of it, that word turned a kind of a somersault, and tuck back up the road ergin, its years laid, flat, jest scooting

for—Well, to name the place that “damn” was heading for I’d have to let out another cuss word, which I ain’t aiming to do; so I’ll jest say it was making for home, and let it go at that.

“There she goes! Head her off! *Head her!*” Tony bawls, checking up his beast, and turning erbout with the gravel flying off into the bresh, and the trail smoking behind him.

All hands from both camps spread out acrost the road whooping and hollering for all they was wurth. But, with them hollering in front, and Tony whooping up behind, that “damn” word commenced to squawk and to fly like a skeered guinea hen. All us hands made a jump for it, but it sailed right over the heads of every one ’cept Paul. He give sech a master leap that it landed him atop of a white oak tree, and from there he bounded over on to a low-hanging cloud, ketching that cuss word on the way.

“Aw, *looky!* Look at Tony up in the clouds!” the little feller screeches out, dancing eround and all carried erway.

“That ain’t Mr. Beaver up yander; it’s Mr. Bunyan,” Paul’s hands hollers back at him, clean outdone.

Well, sirs! Things sure commenced to look bad for Paul. That cloud had been jest drifting erlong, hanging low in a kind of a doze, but when Paul landed down on its back, all so sudden, it give a great bound, and headed for the sky like a skeered racer, with Paul hung up on it, and no way er reaching ground ergin. More’n that, the cloud was right thin, and it looked like, heavy as Paul is, he mought fall spang through it any minute. Every step he tuck he went down waist-deep in the thing; and it’s the truth, time and ergin the fellers seen his boots come dangling through the bottom side of the cloud with nothing but air betwixt them and deestruction. All of Paul’s hands sets up a turrible yammering, hollering up at him to “take keer” and “mind out” and “don’t fall,” and all like that, like the feller would fall if he could he’p hissself. Tony’s hands, wanting to show they manners, they hollered too. Johnny Inkslinger, what’s the greatest cal’ulator the world has ever knowed, unlimbered his fountain pen and commenced to figger out the distance from the ground, Paul’s weight, and all like that, so’s they’d know how bad he’d be busted when he drapped.

“Git ready for the wurst, boys, for he’ll be nothing but fractions when he hits,” he says, figgering and sniffing, with the ink and tears all spluttering out together.

But erbout then Big Ole lets out a great yell. “It’s all right! Ole Paul’s all right! He’s kicking him up a thunderstorm!” he hollers.

Sure ’nough, when we-all looked we seen that Paul was milling ’round in the cloud, trompling on it and teasing it, making the thing so mad that it was gitting blacker and blacker every minute, twill d’reckly it all fires up

and busts out in er turrible storm, swearing and spitting out thunder and lightning at him. Paul waits jest long enough to pick him a good streak of lightning, and then he slides to the ground on it all safe and sound, 'cept his pants was some scorched, and a person could smell singed whiskers. But the cuss word, it was burnt to a crisp.

"I have to thank ole Pecos Bill for that trick," says Paul, breshing hissself off. "Bill, he's that great cattle man they got down in Texas. He kin take a cyclone by the year, ride it acrost three states, and slide to ground on the lightning whenever he gits ready."

"I knowed you was all right, Tony. I knowed you'd slide down on the lightning streak," says the little feller.

"Now look a-here, buddy, you got to git things straight," says Tony, kinder worried. "*That's* Mister Bunyan," he says, pinting at Paul, "and *this* here is me. It was him, not me, slided down on the lightning streak."

The little feller looks at him mighty big-eyed and earnest, doing his best to onderstand, but in the end he says, jest like he had afore, "Aw, you fool me!"

At that Paul Bunyan lets out ernother great crackling laf, shrugging up his shoulders, and rubbing his elbows erginst his ribs. "That big laf's gitting closer, I kin feel it tickling my funny bones," he says.

Tony Beaver looks and looks at the little feller in a kind of a daze.

"Well, I will be dogged!" he says, like big news had struck him.

"Haw, haw, haw! Do you reckon it kin be true, brother?" says Paul.

"Well, there's one way to find out. Come on, let's take it!" says Tony. With that he takes the little boy up on his shoulder, and, not saying nothing to none of us, him and Paul went off into the bresh together.

Tony, he led along through the woods till they come to a little clear spring running out from under the roots of a witch-hazel bush. "Now then, buddy, you work us a charm," he says to the little feller. With that he breaks off a switch from the witch-hazel like what you've seen a water doctor use, and gives it to the young-un to whip through the spring for a spell. Then he says to Paul, "Look, brother, and tell me what you kin see." And standing right side by side they both of 'em looked down into the water.

"I see myself and nobody else," says Paul. "What do you see, brother?"

"I see myself and nobody else," says Tony.

So there you see how it was: after the little feller had charmed the water it showed 'em the truth—what the young-un had sensed all erlong—that Tony and Paul was one and the same feller, only dressed up in different skin and bones, and going under the name er Paul Bunyan in one part er the world and Tony Beaver in ernother. Did any of you folks ever meet yer very own self right face to face? Well, I ain't neither, and I know mighty well I

ain't craving to. No, sir! If there's another me—Jerry Dan Doolittle—roaming around the world dressed up in another body, I'll jest thank him to keep erway from me for according to my figgering *one* of us is a-plenty. You'd think it would be a powerful awesome sight to meet up with yerself, but dogged if it tuck them two fellers thataway.

“So you're me an' I'm you!” says Tony with a great “Haw, haw!”

“I'm you an' you're me, and I wouldn't be s'prised if ole Pecos Bill from down yander in Texas wasn't mixed up with us, too,” says Paul. “And what did I tell you erbout a big laf coming?”

With that the two of 'em jest laid back, whooping and hollering and laffing fit to bust the sky wide open. They did sorter try to check theyselves up and not act too much like fools for wanter sense, but the big laf had struck 'em; one of 'em 'ud holler out, “You're me!” and the tother 'ud answer back, “I'm you!” and off they'd go ergin: “Haw, haw, haw!”

Well, er course all that whooping and carrying on fetched the tother fellers loping into the woods, hollering to know what was the joke, like hounds on a hot trail. By that time it sure looked like Paul and Tony hadn't got no sense at all, for they was carrying on like they was making theyselves acquainted with theyselves. “Mr. Beaver, meet Mr. Beaver,” Tony 'ud say, and Paul 'ud answer back, “Mr. Bunyan, shake hands with my friend Mr. Bunyan,” and off the two of 'em would go ergin in the craziest laffing a person ever did hear, with the little feller jumping up and down, hollering, “Aw, look at Tony introducing hissself to hissself!”

Well, er course none of us hands could make head ner tail outer the thing, but d'reckly the big laf struck us too, and seemed like the more we didn't know what it was all erbout the more tickled we got. One feller'd holler out to another, “Hey, buddy! What's the joke?” And the tother'd answer back, “I'll be dogged if I know!” And then the whole shooting match'd go off ergin, whooping and laffing, laying up erginst stumps, and holding on to they sides.

Well now, er course when a whole parcel er folks gits to laffing beyond theyselves thataway they is running a turrible risk er hitting the world's funny bone, and everybody knows when *that* happens the world can't hold the laf in and it comes shaking out in a earthquake that is liable to crack a smile a mile wide. So when Paul and Tony commenced to feel the earth heaving up in a kind of a giggle, with a deep far-off growl rumbling up through it, they knowed mighty well what they was heading for.

“Hey, brother, mind out er we'll have the world laffing with us d'reckly!” Tony sings out. “An' more'n that, my jaws is commencing to hurt,” he says.

“That’s bad! Haw, haw, haw, haw! That sure is bad!” Paul hollers back. “Here, you fellers, quit this foolishness now and sober down like I’m doing,” he says, laying up erginst a sapling and laffing so hard a person could see the lafs running up the tree and giggling out through the leaves. “Here, quit that! *Quit!* I say, and think er somepen solemn!”

“A toothache’s a solemn thing; let’s think of that,” says Charlie the Swede.

“A stomick ache is more solemn,” says Big Henry, doing his best.

But at that all the Eel River crew jest fell over on the ground laffing, for if there’s one thing that *is* comical it’s Big Henry when his vittles turns erginst him. “Aw, Tony, make him quit! Don’t let him say nothing like that if yer aiming to git us checked up! Aw, my jaws, my jaws!” we hollers out, and the world itself rumbled out ernother long “*Ho! Ho! Ho-o-o-o-o!*”

“Here, Inkslinger, git to work now and figger out how long it’ll be ’fore the world busts out with that laf!” Paul hollers to his timekeeper.

Johnny Inkslinger sets to work, figgering and laffing as best he could, and d’reckly he gits out, “Mr. Bunyan, sir—Haw, haw, haw! Excuse me. Haw, haw! Excuse me! As nigh as—as I can figger it the world’ll bust wide open laffing inside of the next fift—fif—Haw! haw! haw! Fifteen minutes, thirty-three seconds, and—and sixty-seven hundredths of a second. *Haw, haw, haw!*”

“You hear that now, Mr. Beaver!” says Paul, reeling up to Tony, and skeercely able to stand for laffing. “The world’s going to bust wide open inside of the next fifteen minutes if we don’t all git together and think up somepen solemn.”

“Well,” says Tony, easing hisself down on a stump, ’cause by now his legs had done failed him, “the solemnest thing we got in this camp is ole Brother Moses Mutters, the preacher feller.”

“Send for him, then!” says Paul. “Send for him quick afore the world busts and we busts with it!”

So, running and laffing, Big Henry and the Sullivan feller puts out after the preacher, and all the tother hands fell over on the ground and jest fa’rly give up, whooping and hollering, holding on to they sides, and complaining erbout they jaws, with the world frisking up beneath ’em, shaking out little giggles ahead of the big laf like you’ve seen dust devils scooting along in front of a windstorm. Then d’reckly here come Big Henry and Sullivan back ergin, still running and laffing with the ole preacher hustled erlong betwixt ’em. The ole feller stood up there in the midst of all them crazy hands, clawing his fingers through his whiskers and looking like a scan’alized billy goat. And it sure was a shock to him to see his ole stand-by, Ain’t-That-So, had done fell over laffing with the best of ’em.



“There now! Didn’t I tell you he was solemn? Aw, my jaws, my jaws!” says Tony.

“It ain’t my jaws, it’s my stomick hurts the most! Aw, haw, haw, haw! He’s the solemnest thing I ever seen in all my life!” Paul says.

“Yes! Go on and laf!” the ole preacher bellers at ’em, all fired up, and gitting inter his stride. “Laf yer fool heads off, but *some* day you-all will find out that this world is but a desert drear.”

“Aw, my soul I Don’t she look like it right this minute!” Jack Sullivan bawls out, and “*Ho! Ho! Ho-o-o-o-o-o!*” come that deep rumble from the world, for seemed like having itself called a desert drear tickled it all up and down the bed rock of its ribs.

The ole preacher was kinder startled when he heared that long “*Ho! Ho! Ho-o-o-o-o-o-o!*” But he tuck a brace and sets out ergin. “Don’t you know that hell is right down *thar?*” he says, stomping his foot on the ground, and “*Whoof!*” says the world back at him, giving a kind of a giggle and a buck-jump.

“Hey! What’s *that?*” says the ole feller, jucking up his foot mighty quick.

Well, all hands knowed doggoned well what it was, and we sure didn’t want the thing to bust through, but having the world sassing back at the preacher thataway, and him jucking up his foot so quick jest after locating hell right under it, got us more tickled’n ever, so’s we jest couldn’t speak fer laffing. More’n that, Jack Sullivan jumps his feets up, too, like Brother Mutters had done, and sings out, “*Ouch!* My foot’s hot, too! What erbout your’n, buddy?”

“They’s on fire!” says Big Henry, and after that them two big idgits went off in a crazy kind of a dance, jucking up they feets and shaking ’em in the air like they was walking on a hot griddle. It sure was scan’lous, and course it didn’t do nothing to sober down the tothers.

“Aw, my jaws I My jaws!” says Tony.

“It’ll be more’n yer *jaws* that’ll hurt bimeby!” the preacher yells at him. “Hell—hell—*hell*—” he says, and there he hung up dead with a kind of a guggle, his face drawed up and his throat working like he was fighting for all he was wurth to git his words out.

“*Aw, my soul!* Look a-yander! The ole feller’s going to laf!” Big Henry bawls, all dumbfounded. At that all hands ketches aholt of they breath and jest looks and looks with all the looks they had, for it sure was a awesome sight.

“Hell—” Brother Mutters commences ergin, making a brave fight for it. “Hell—h-e-e-el—he—he—*he*—HE—” But, puff as he would, pore ole feller, he jest *couldn’t* make the grade, and in another pair er seconds he busts all ter pieces,—“He, he, he! Aw, ho, ho! He, he, he! Haw, haw!”—

crackling out the awfulest laffing a person ever did hear. He stands up, and lafs for a spell, but d'reckly his knees broke under him, and he flops down on a log; but even that wa'n't enough, and in the end the ole feller jest sprawls right out flat on the ground, whooping and hollering and laffing.

Well, sirs! That done the trick, sobering up the tother fellers in a hurry, for there wa'n't no living man had ever heard the preacher laf afore and it sure was a turrible solemn sound. Even the world itself swallowed back its giggles, with the long rumble of the big laf dying down and down in the distance.

All hands commenced to tell the news of it to one another. "Ole Brother Moses Mutters is laffing," they'd say, passing the word from mouth to mouth like they was awestruck. Thataway it got turrible solemn to 'em, and d'reckly they give way under it.

"Aw, my soul! Jest look a-yander now at ole Brother Mutters!" Jack Sullivan says, breaking down, and hunting him his bandanna.

"I jest can't *stand* having him laf! Make him quit, Tony!" Big Henry bawls, sniffing and sniffing, and wiping his nose acrost his sleeve.

"Brother Mutters is laffing, and he'll *never* tell us no more erbout he-hell," says Jack Sullivan.

"Ner erbout the devil! Seems like I jest can't git erlong 'thout the devil!" Big Henry bellers, carrying on like he was losing his blood brother.

And there you see how it was: none er the Eel River crew had ever set much store by hell and the devil, and all like that, as long as they had it, but now when it looked like it was slipping from 'em they sets up a turrible lamentation—ain't that jest like human natur?

"Here, *quit* that! Don't you know this world is a vale er tears and a desert drear like you allus said?" Big Henry yells at the preacher. But "Haw, haw, haw!" was all he got back from the ole feller. "He never laffed afore in all his life, and he's sixty-three if he's a day. Make him quit, Tony! I jest *can't stand* this!" Big Henry blubbers.

"You say he's sixty-three and never laffed afore?" says Johnny Inkslinger. "Then, as nigh as I kin figger it, he'll have to go on laffing day and night for three weeks, five days, sixteen hours, thirty-three minutes, and forty-seven seconds afore he gits hissself laffed up to date and kin quit. No, hole on a minute! I made a bad mistake," he says, scratching out some figgers. "He'll have to laf three weeks, five days, sixteen hours, thirty-three minutes, and forty-five seconds, and a half, 'stead of forty-seven seconds like I said at furst."

And that's jest *exactly* what the ole feller done. He kep' right erlong day and night, night and day, with that awful dry crackling laf till the very

second and a half Johnny Inkslinger had figgered out, and then *bang!* he stopped dead, and went on back to being jest as solemn as he ever had been.

Well, anyhow, him laffing jest in the nick er time like he done got all hands and the world itself outer a turrible fix. But what it was hit the world's funny bone and started the big laf in the furst place none er the hands ever did know. Tony Beaver he tole it to *me* private "'cause," he says, "you're here to git the truth," and course I was. The nighest any of the other fellers come to tetching the truth was when Paul Bunyan and his crew was leaving the Eel River camp.

"Well, good-by, Tony Bunyan," Paul says with a grin.

"Aw, Paul Beaver, don't start nothing like that now, er you'll have us all off ergin," Tony answers him back.





## CHAPTER VIII

### FAR' YOU WELL

Well now, fellers, you-all what's been reading along through these pages, if you've come as fer on the way with me as this you ain't strangers no more, but real ole-time friends, and I'm right sorry we've come to the end of the trail—for this is the end.

When Tony Beaver and me got that last tale about him and Paul Bunyan, and all us hands from both crews, Eel River and the Big Onion, hitting the world's funny bone, tried over with the lie-paper, all the lies sorted outter it, and packed away with the tother tales, we seen, shake 'em down as we would, there wa'n't room in the sack for a single nother word.

“Well, Truth-Teller,” Tony says, “I reckon that's jest about all one man kin tote anyhow. You take them tales on out to the world, tell the world howdy from me, and pass 'em around, so's folks'll know what's the truth, and what's the tother thing about me, and all us folks up Eel River. And now,” he says, “we'll all bid you far'well.”

With that he token him that great cow's horn of hisn, that's a whole heap bigger 'an any natcheral born cow ever *did* have, and he blowed sech a mighty Tooo—oot—toot! on it, that all the hands and folks come a-running in from ever' which way, they years laid back, hollering to know what's up.

“Fellers,” says Tony, “I have blowed you all in from the woods, to say far'well to the Truth-Teller. He's got jest about all the tales he kin tote now; he's gonna take 'em on out, pass 'em round through the world, and more'n that he's taking the truth out with him—that is, jest about all the truth we got,” he says. “Now you-all know it's a mighty solemn thing to say far'well to the truth, but I reckon the best o' friends must part, as the saying is.”

“We *all* got to part in this vale o' tears,” Brother Moses Mutters sings out.

“Ain't—that—so!” says his ole buddy.

“Err—*erk!* Err—*erk!* Err—R-O-O-O-O-O-O!” says the joky feller, flopping his arms, and dragging out his crow mighty long and mournful.

“That's right, Tony! Ever'body gotter part!” “Ain't that so!” “Sure is a fact!” “Best o' friends must part!” “*Ain't* that the truth!” all hands busts out mighty solemn and sad, and they hadn't said, “Ever'body gotter part,” and “Ain't that so,” more'n about six times 'fore they all commenced to break under it, sniffing and sniffing, wiping they noses acrost they sleeves, and complaining about having token a bad cold some way—and I won't say I wasn't one of 'em, for you-all know them kinder colds is mighty ketching.

But Tony Beaver ain't never a hand to be down in the mouth for long, an he's allus sure to see the best side o' things.

"Well," he says, "Jerry Dan's taking away all our truth, but I reckon the world needs it more'n we do, so we'll jest have to do the best we kin without it. And anyhow," he says, "it'll be somepen to know the truth is all in one place, and ain't stragglin' round under foot ever' which way."

All hands cheers up ergin at that and busts out, "Well, that's so, Tony!" "Yes, sir! B'lieve yer right!" "Cert'n'y is so!" "Yes, fellers! The world needs the truth bad, so we'll jest make out with somepen else!" All of 'em hollering together, for they sure is a mighty generous parcel o' folks, 'at'll part with the truth any day to he'p a friend out.

"Git the path ready now, to carry Jerry Dan out," Tony says.

"No, sir! No, Mister Beaver! *Ex-cuse* me, but I don't crave to ride that there path ergin. I'll jest hook me in a saw-log, and go on down the river thataway," I says.

"All right, suit yerself!" Tony says. "Only for the world's sake don't let none o' that truth we're sending out to it, git wet, for you know as well as I do, any truth 'at falls into Eel River is jest *ruined* for life."

All hands and folks was there by now: Miss Betsy Beaver was there, and that little buddy too, setting up on Tony's shoulder. I sure did feel bad at parting with 'em all, for a nicer, friendlier parcel o' folks I never *did* see! More'n that I'd been up yonder through thick and thin, I'd danced to the big music with all of 'em, and laffed with the world's funny bone, and when you've once done that with a feller, you and him, and the whole o' creation is all made over. But a common hand like me can't stay up Eel River forever; it's grand to go up yonder, but it's good to come back ergin, and now, seein' s as I had the truth, which was what I'd come for, and a sack full o' tales, there wa'n't nothing more for me to stay for.

So I hooks me in a right stout saw-log, steps out on it, with my poke o' tales well up on my back outer reach of Eel River, and waving my hand to ever'body, sets out.

All hands and folks stood up yonder on the bank, and hollered "Far' you well, Jerry Dan!" "Come ergin, Truth-Teller!" "Take keer of yerself—and take keer of that truth!" and all like that hollering and waving.

Miss Betsy Beaver, she waves her apron: Big Henry and the Sullivan feller, they waves they fists: that joky hand crowed his last crow to speed me on the way: ole Brother Mutters waves the hand that ain't dragging out his whiskers: Tony Beaver waves, and the little buddy up there on his shoulder, he waves too. They was even some wild varmints, possums, rabbits, coons, and critters, what run outer the woods too, r'aring up on they behind legs,

and waving they paws up wide, and all of 'em, varmints and folks and hands, was a-waving and hollering together.

“*Good-bye! Good-bye, Truth-Teller! Far' you well, Jerry Dan! Say 'howdy' to the world for me!*” Tony waves and hollers, and his little buddy kicks his heels, and flops his arms up wide, hollering, “That's right! Say howdy to the world for Tony and me!”

And as I floated on down Eel River, around the bend, and outer sight, I could still hear 'em and knowed they was waving they arms and paws and things, all hollering:

“*Good-bye, Jerry Dan! Good-bye! Good-bye!*” “*Come ergin, Truth Teller!*” “*Wish you luck!*” “*Take keer o' yerself—and take keer o'the truth!*” “*Far'you well! Say howdy to the world!*” “*G-O-O-D—B-Y-E, Jerry Dan!*” “*F-A-R' Y-O-U W-E-L-L!*”

Wa'n't that a grand send-off? And now here I am back again with howdy to the world from Tony Beaver and all the folks and hands up Eel River. Jest one word more, and then I'm done—If any feller that reads these tales don't b'lieve 'em, I'll jest ast him to fetch erlong the very finest gilt-edged brand of lie-paper he kin find anywheres, and try it out erginst mine, for I'll back Tony's erginst any brand in the whole world.

That's all, so far' you well!



[The end of *Up Eel River* by Margaret Prescott Montague]