

The Way Joel Said Farewell

And Then Changed His Mind About Leaving.

By CLARISSA MACKIE

When Joel Tykesbury opened the letter and read that his step-uncle on his mother's side had died without near relatives and had left him the comfortable sum of \$15,000 in cash there was not a soul to whom he confided the astounding news. Close locked behind his compressed lips was hidden a secret that would have provided the people of Little River with a measureless source of interest for the coming winter months.

Joel kept his secret, and no one was the wiser when he closed the little harness shop and spent several days in New York. But when he returned from the city and proceeded to sell the contents of his shop at auction prices, when he presented the furniture contained in his lonely bachelor abode to the thrifless Nickols family, who lived on the edge of the village, and finally when the minister dropped a word in the midst of the Ladies' Aid society's Wednesday sociable then Little River sat up very straight and took notice.

"Yes," said Mr. Beeman, thoughtfully stroking his scanty beard. "Joel says he's tired of Little River, so he is going to New York to live. He seems to feel rather bitter about the way he's been received in our village. He says he's lived here fifteen years and he isn't much better acquainted than when he came."

"That's every mite his own fault, then!" cried Miss Fanny Pollard warmly. "He's the most unsoberable man in Little River. My conscience is clear about Joel Tykesbury. I've done the best I could to make it pleasant for him in church and out!" A suppressed giggle from the young girls in a distant corner closed Miss Fanny's lips into a grim frown. Her small brown eyes shot little angry sparks at the gigglers.

"That is very true, Miss Pollard," soothed the minister peacefully. "I am sure we have all done our best to make Joel feel at home in our midst."

Mrs. Deacon Spinning bit her thread with a sharp click of her false teeth and folded up the gingham apron she had completed. "Seems like I'll never forgive myself if Joel Tykesbury goes away from Little River feeling sore about the way he's been treated. I don't believe any of you really know just how kind hearted he is. Only he's dreadful shy, and it's a setback to him."

"Maybe he is going to get married. Now I come to think of it I shouldn't wonder a mite if that was the secret of his going. He's going to get married to a widdler, maybe, and she, having a houseful of furniture left by her first husband, won't have no need for Joel's things." Mrs. Spinning beamed around the busy circle. "I'm mighty glad to think he's going to get married. He's just the nicest kind of man. He'll make some girl a good husband. I'm disappointed, though. I kinder hoped he'd pick a wife from Little River."

There was a long silence after this, until at last Mrs. Willowell, at whose house they had met, announced that refreshments would be served in the dining room, and so for the time being Joel Tykesbury and his affairs were forgotten.

Joel himself, having given away his furniture and disposed of his business, sat in his lonely room in the best hotel the village afforded and wondered what he would do next.

"I'll shake the dust of this here village from my feet," said Joel morosely, eyeing his reflection in the wavy mirror with a gloomy frown. "There won't be one person that will miss me when I'm gone. If I'd been treated decent here I'd never thought of leaving Little River. It would have done the village good to spend my money here. I could build a house as fine as Lawyer Reggs and live on my interest money. The women ain't never noticed me much, and I ain't

a bad looking feller." Joel reddened as he lifted shy eyes at his reflection in the mirror. Good looking in spite of the irregularities in the glass. In fact, Joel Tykesbury was a handsome man, and although he was forty years old there was not a thread of white in his abundant hair.

Suddenly he arose and, approaching the glass, brushed his hair into some semblance of order. "I'll go to New York tomorrow night, and now, after I've had my supper, I'll say goodby to some of the folks that I've had acquaintance with."

Joel's scowl was quite black when he rang the doorbell at Spinnings'; therefore when the portal swung wide and the hall shed a stream of light over his form he blinked and winced like an owl.

"It's Joel Tykesbury, as I live!" cried Mrs. Spinning heartily. "Now, this is real neighborly! Come right in and have a bite to eat. We've just sat down to supper. Henry, here's Joel come to supper!"

"Henry," she said, addressing her husband, "eat your supper quick and be about what I planned. Tonight at 9 o'clock—everybody, yes, understand?" Mrs. Spinning nodded and frowned and smiled at her husband.

"I'll see to it, Maria," he chuckled softly. Then, addressing their guest, he said, "When are you going to leave Little River, Joel?"

"Tomorrow night," said Joel, helping himself to another biscuit. "Wish you was going to stay," said the deacon cordially. "You'll be missed, Joel."

"Missed?" scoffed Mr. Tykesbury, forgetting his diffidence in his astonishment. "Who'll miss me?"

"Everybody in Little River," said the deacon quietly. "There's few here but what you've done a good turn for some time or other. You've forgotten 'em, I suppose, but folks haven't! They like to see you around, and if you wasn't so bashful you'd be the most popular man in the village, not even excepting the postmaster. Eh, Maria?"

"Of course he would! You look so stern, Joel, that it seems to some folks that you're a stony pillar of the church—in deed as well as name!" Mrs. Spinning laughed heartily. "Do you recollect my niece, Charlotte Wayland?" she asked as she stepped into the front parlor and lighted the prism lamp on the center table. "She was visiting me ten years ago."

Joel flushed hotly. Indeed, he did remember the pretty girl at whom he scarcely dared glance in church, yet to whom he had irrevocably lost his heart. Much of the silence and loneliness of the past ten years might be laid at the door of his heart'sickness after pretty Charlotte had returned to her distant home. He heard afterward that she had married.

"I remember," he said faintly. "She's in Little River. Come to visit my sister. Charlotte's a widow and as pretty a one as I ever saw. I declare, it don't seem proper for a widow to be quite so good looking as our Charlotte." Mrs. Spinning smiled innocently as she thrust a photograph into Joel's hand. "That's Charlotte. She's coming around tonight, and you'll have to see her home."

At that instant the bell rang clamorously, and, with a slight chuckle of delight, Mrs. Spinning hastened to answer it, while Joel devoured the picture with his eyes, now hopeful, no longer shy or diffident. Their depths contained a new purpose, a new light, a new courage. Here was something to fight for and win—Charlotte Wayland that was!

The door opened, and into the room streamed a merry crowd of men, women and children. All the folks in Little River seemed gathered together under Deacon Spinning's hospitable roof. "Surprise, Joel Tykesbury!" they cried in unison as they crowded around him.

That was the beginning of the happiest evening Joel had ever known. Before it ended he had forever dropped his cloak of reserve, and he found that his fellow townsmen met him more than halfway. A strange new joy sang in his heart, for the widowed Charlotte had blushed beautifully when their eyes met, and he had asked the pleasure of her company home and been accepted. All at once his plans changed with lightning rapidity. He would remain in Little River. He would build the house, and Charlotte—he would win her! He was

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THE SANTIAM NEWS

glad that his inheritance was still a secret.

"Joel Tykesbury seems to have found his tongue at last," said Miss Fanny Pollard rather acidly. "Seems like he's all took up over that flighty widow. I guess Maria Spinning knew what she was talking about when she said he was going to marry a widow."

Mrs. Spinning overheard the remark and smiled mirthfully. "I didn't know a thing, Fanny. Charlotte's coming now was a dispensation of Providence."

"Dispensation of Providence, assisted by Maria Spinning!" sniffed Miss Pollard, quite unconvinced.

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