The Coming OF Molly Peevy.

By WILL N. HARBEN.

PART I.

Every one in Cove valley, down in Georgia, considered Matt Digby a peddler. Joel Holtzclaw disliked her more than any woman in "the Cove." She would often stop him obtrusively when he passed her cottage, and ask after the health of his children, and sigh, and say that it was such a pity their mother had died when they were so young and helpless.

But although Matt Digby was in her thirty-seventh year and was unmarried, she had never thought of capturing Joel for herself.

The truth of the matter was that Matt Digby did not want Joel to marry Mary Ann Hardiman, a pretty spinster just her age and her next door neighbor. Matt liked Mary Ann as well as she liked any good-looking unmarried woman, and she would have left her own work any day to help her

You Needn't Tell Me What You Went For," Sneered Mat.

with her quiltings, jelly-making, fruit-canning, or anything else that two woman can do better than one, but she would never help her to marry Joel Holtzclaw.

She told herself that any woman of Mary Ann's age, who had as good a home as Mary Ann had, and was pretty enough "to get the best that was going," would be a fool to burden herself with another woman's children and a shiftless man, who had his spree almost as regularly as Saturday came around.

Matt had good grounds for believing that the marriage would never take place, although Joel and Mary Ann had been lovers for many years, and had only been prevented from marrying ten years before by old man Hardiman's strong objection to Joel. The truth was that Holtzclaw's late wife, who was a jealous, irascible woman, full of imaginary ills and wrongs, had exacted a promise from Joel not to marry again in case she died.

Everybody in "the Cove" knew this. A few believed that Joel would be justified in breaking the promise, since it seemed that nothing but a wife and some comforts would keep him from drinking once a week, and since his children were so badly in need of a mother's care. But the majority were opposed to it; and now and then, when the gossip was loudest, some one would openly declare that if Holtzclaw ever married he should be "churched."

One morning from the window of her cottage Matt saw Mary Ann leave the back door of her house with a tray, on which there was something covered with a napkin, and make her way through the tall, dewy ragweeds to Joel's cottage.

"Ah!" exclaimed Matt. "She's going to feed them children. I'll bet my bottom dollar he didn't get home last night. He's on another bender and she'll have them over in her entry-room tonight, sure as preaching."

Matt hurriedly lifted her coffee-kettle from the coals so that it would not boil over in her absence, forked a piece of bacon from a hot frying pan into a plate and went out among the sassafras bushes near Joel's fence. Here she stood for several minutes.

"I'll bet she's dressing the imps!" she said, impatiently. "If I had thought of that I could a-finished my coffee and bacon."

The next minute Mary Ann came out of Joel's house, the empty tray under her arm. Seeing Matt there in the slanting rays of the sun, gazing at her so critically, she flushed. She paused on the steps for an instant and wound a stray lock of her rich brown hair about the knot behind her head, and then stepped down into the rank weeds.

"He didn't come home last night?" said Matt, breaking a sassafras twig and chewing the end of it.

Mary Ann drew her damp skirt from the clinging briars and climbed over the rail fence. Matt could not help admitting to herself that Mary Ann was graceful in movement. She was so well-formed, too, and the fresh morning air had given her such a wonderful color.

"No, he didn't," Mary Ann replied, as she got down on the other side, near to the questioner. Then she sighed. "I have just been over to give little Joe and Fanny a bite to eat."

"You needn't tell me what you went for," sneered Matt, with a hard, unforgiving stare. "You are making a fool of yourself. I'll bet my life you didn't close your eyes all last night a-listening for him to pass."

A look of weary resignation came into Mary Ann's face. She was too deeply troubled to mind Matt Digby's reproaches. She hitched the tray and napkin under her arm.

"I couldn't help it," she sighed. "The sight of them little things a-standing at the gate last night a-looking down the road nearly broke my heart."

"You went over and put 'em to bed, I'll be bound," went on Matt, tentatively.

"They was afraid to go into the house by themselves," replied Mary Ann, looking down and shaking her damp skirt. "I set by them until they went to sleep, and if he had come home anyways out of sorts I'd a-gone over again. I didn't undress."

"It is a pity about that promise he made to their mother," continued Matt; "for he really ought to marry somebody."

Mary Ann's pretty lips twitched, and she wiped them with her shapely hand. She nodded, but that was all the answer she made. There was an awkward pause, then she caught up her skirt.

"I must go in and help sister about her ironing," she said; "and I reckon you got your own work to do." She turned and, treading the weeds beneath her, made her way across the yard to her cottage.

A woman about fifteen years her senior was in the sitting room, bending over an ironing-board, which rested on the backs of two chairs, near a window. As Mary Ann entered she went to the fireplace and took up a fresh iron. She dusted the ashes from it with her apron, and tested its heat with a damp finger.

"Was they out of bed?" she asked, sympathetically.

"Yes, and a-setting by the window a-watching the road to town. Little Joe had been a-crying. He dried his eyes, and tried to make out that they hadn't been up long, and I heard them jump out of bed before daylight."

The elder woman sighed. She went to her board and rubbed her iron on a folded newspaper till it began to scorch.

"I don't know what's to be done, Mary Ann," she sighed, "but this can't go on. I have been thinking. In one way it looks like you ought to marry Joel. He's the only man you ever wanted, and you are the first one he ever took a-liking to. If it just wasn't for that promise to a dead woman—"

"I hain't no idea of trying to make him break it," interrupted Mary Ann, despondently. She put the tray in the cupboard and came out and stood before her sister, her hands at her shapely waist. "It's just them poor children I'm a-thinking about now. Seems to me if they was just provided for the balance wouldn't matter. I reckon he's made a night of it, and will be along some time today."

"Not till dark," opined Mrs. Batson, sprinkling the garment on the board with water from a bowl. "He's always that ashamed to let you see him after one of his tantrums that he waits for the shelter of darkness to pass the house."

The two women had the children over to dinner that day. Matt Digby saw Mary Ann go through the weeds for them. She brought back the little yellow-haired girl in her arms, and led the boy by the hand. Matt went out in her back yard to her beehive, near Mary Ann's fence. She wented Mary Ann to know that she had observed the proceedings. She would have made some pertinent remark if she could have caught Mary Ann's eye, but she could not do so. Little Joe was talking and Mary Ann was looking down at him and holding the little girl's head close to her face.

As the afternoon began to wane, the two sisters concluded that the little ones would be apt to spend the night with them, but happening to go out on her porch, just as the sun was going down behind the mountain, Mary Ann saw a familiar form coming up the road. It was Joel Holtzclaw. Her heart rose in her throat, and she fell to trembling

His Face Softened as He Leaned Over the Fence to Her.

with excitement. She did not look up as he drew near, fearing to notice something in his walk that would indicate that he was still under the influence of drink. She did not look towards him till she heard his voice at the bars.

"I wish you would step down here, Mary Ann," he called. "I want to see you."

She nodded and went down toward him. As he stood there awaiting her, his hat off in deference to her, and his long hair brushed back from his brow, she was glad that her house cut him off from Matt Digby's view. Her heart throbbed painfully as she thought that it would be only another embarrassing confession of weakness and shame for the neglect of his children. But to her surprise, as she drew near him his glance met hers frankly and steadily, and there were about him none of the signs of dissoluteness which her sight had grown keen to detect.

"Howdy do?" he said. "Have you been looking after them children again?"

She nodded, unable to speak for a moment.

"I 'lowed you would," he added, and she found her voice in the silence that followed his words.

"They are in there now, Joel," she said. "They've had their supper and look sleepy. I was just thinking they might as well stay with us, but if you want 'em, now you are at home—"

"I'd hate to disappoint 'em," he answered, seeing that she was going no further. "They like over at your house uncommon well. If it hain't too much trouble, let 'em stay tonight." Then a red flush on his face and neck showed that his thoughts had taken a turn. He tore a splinter from one of the bars, thrust it between his teeth, and plunged suddenly into what he wanted to say. "You may not think so, Mary Ann," he stammered, "but this time I've kept sober. The minute I heard I couldn't get back last night, I knew what you'd have to think, but there was no helpin' it. They nabbed me on the jury in the Matthews' case; Bill Wilson hung us, as he does every jury he's on, and they kept us under lock and key till we declared a verdict, an hour ago. I'd 'a' sent word, but nobody was coming this way. I didn't worry; I knew you'd look after them like you always have done."

"I thought—I thought—I'm sorry—"

She paused. The look on her face was one of mingled pleasure and contrition.

"The Lord knows, you don't owe me no apologies," he laughed, awkwardly chewing the splinter. "I've made a hog of myself so many times hand running, that getting credit for a extra time once in awhile ain't going to shatter my reputation. It's a wonder, though, that I didn't go wrong yesterday; I was in good hands. I was with Fred Bartlett and Jake Plain and they begun as usual. I believe it was the last talk you and me had about liquor that helped me to hold out. You recollect me a-telling you that if I just had you for my wife I'd never drink no more? Well, I got to thinking of that, and it struck me I'd said something mighty foolish. Because if a man can't keep from doing of a thing for his wife's sake, surely he could for a woman that would be his wife if she could. The long and short of it is, I'm going to give up drinking, wife or no wife."

She put her apron to her eyes. His face softened as he leaned over the fence toward her.

"I didnt mean to make you cry, Mary Ann," he added, gently, "or I wouldn't 'a' said it."

"I wouldn't 'a' missed hearing it for my right arm," she sobbed. "I'm going in. I see Matt Digby out in her yard. She'll have something to talk about now."

She turned towards her cottage, and Joel walked on to his house.

That night Joel Holtzclaw did a thing he had not done since the death of his wife. He came over and stood on the porch of Mary Ann's house, and through the window watched her moving about in the candle light within.

She had heard his step, and knew that he was there, but she did not speak to him. She was cold all over, and her hands trembled over every thing she touched, as she put things in the room to rights. He rapped on the window.

"When you get through in there I wish you'd come out here, Mary Ann," he said. "I've got something to say to you."

She glanced at him as he stood in the light, but said nothing. She could not have spoken then to save her life She saw that he had shaved himself, and put on his Sunday clothes, and she knew, from the look of determination on his face, that his visit was to be a momentous one. She knew what he had decided to say, and she loved him the more for it. She would never marry him with that promise hanging over him, but she admired him more than ever for boldly trying to win her over every obstacle.

(To Be Concluded.)

INDUSTRIAL.

Philadelphia Press: There is a better feeling in the coal trade and the belief is that the presidents of the various coal carrying roads will arrive at a speedy solution of their difficulties. It was rumored yesterday that the Philadelphia and Reading and the Delaware Lackawanna and Western Railroad companies had agreed to combine their tonnage. This is instead of each company asking for a certain per cent. as its share of the output, that only one will be named and then the two companies will arrange between themselves for the division. This rumor could not be verified, nor would the parties interested deny it. It is, however, believed that some such scheme is on the carpet. A similar plan was proposed last year, only at that time the Pennsylvania Railroad company was to combine with the Reading and the former company was to have given the latter one per cent. of its quota. This scheme, however, did not work. If the rumor is true, it will go a good ways toward solving the anthracite coal troubles. The Reading and the Lackawanna have been the most persistent in sticking up for what they term the tonnage that they are entitled to.

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A Birmingham, Ala., dispatch says: Reports from various southern points east of the Mississippi show a remarkable tide of immigration from the northwest to the south since the holidays. They naturally ask for the brand of goods with which they have been familiar in the west, and this fact has caused a number of purchases to be made in Chicago by southern merchants, who have never before used the western markets except for grain and food products. A number of minor industries are being located in the south by western people. Representatives of the various professions from the northwest are looking for new locations in the south, and current events seem to favor a close political and industrial alliance of the south and northwest. No fewer than 500 land agents have gone from the southern states to the northwest since the 1st of January for the purpose of presenting the advantages of different localities and inducing home seekers from the northwest to locate in the south. A large per cent. of the settlers from the northwest are Grand Army ment, and this fact wil show a heavy increase in the pension payments for the next year in the southern states.

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Superintendent A. Mitchell, of the Lehigh Valley railroad at Wilkes-Barre, left for Philadelphia on Monday in the interest of the company in regard to the six new locomotives with seven feet drivers that the Lehigh are to purchase for the "flyer" to be run between New York and Buffalo in nine hours to compete with a train on the New York Central and Hudson River railroad, called the Empire State Express. This train will be put on in the spring. The Lehigh Valley have accepted Mr. Mitchell's designing for these fine locomotives.

The coal trade of England last year was unsatisfactory. The estimated production by the London Times is 190,000,000 tons, or 2,000,000 more than in 1894. The price of coal fell from 1d to 1s 2d during the year, and at the close of the year was lower than for seven years. Wages of miners in Scotland have been reduced to 4s 6d per day.

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The total imports of tin plate from Great Britain in 1895 were 222,901 tons, as compared with 226,879 tons in 1894, and 255,583 tons in 1893.

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President Gates, of the Illinois Steel company, which yesterday reopened its works, closed recently for repairs, says: "We start with large tonnage booked, and with demand for rails good. Prices of Bessemer iron billets and rods are $1.50 to $2 per ton higher than twenty to thirty days ago, and the general prospect is very favorable.

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The total merchandise and specie sent out of the country to pay European bills in the three years ending December 31, 1895, was $577,962,000, as compared with $398,560,000 in the three years ending December 31, 1892. The total merchandise trade for the first period was $4,770,010,043, as compared with $5,259,082,478 in the last period.

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Engine No. 637 has just been overhauled at Wilkes-Barre shops of the Valley company and is painted with the new aluminum paint of the standard color of the Lehigh Valley cars and locomotives. This engine will now go into service on the Mountain Cut Off.

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One of the Reading receivers is quoted as saying that the Reading's claim of 21 per cent. of the anthracite production will be insisted upon, and that the company will not be a party to any agreement for the improvement of the trade which does not include this claim.

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The Pittsburg American Manufacturer says, concerning the iron and steel trade: "The opinion prevails that prices have touched the lowest notch, and that there will probably be a general strengthening."

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The Cleveland Iron Trade Review says favorable signs are more numerous in the iron trade, and the past fortnight has put a better aspect on nearly every department of the market.

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The total number of immigrants arriving in this country last year was 324,545, as compared with 248,983 in 1894. In any estimate of the foreign trade this item is a most important one.

RAIL ROAD NOTES.

Chauncey Hart, who was hurt some weeks ago, while performing his duties on the Delaware and Hudson railroad has returned to work. Mr. Hart was riding on the steps of a locomotive when an express company's truck, which was too close to the track injured his leg. The National Express company paid Mr. Hart $600 as it was due to the negligence of one of its employes that the accident occurred.

In the very complete article on the Delaware division of the Erie, published in the Engineering News, Superintendent Derr in an interview with the writer of the article said in speaking of the instruction to night signal men in the towers: "You must not go to sleep and then wake up and see the headlight of a train standing at the tower, you must first go down stairs and find out what train it is, wash your hands and face, or do something to get yourself fully awake before touching the bell key, and you must not touch the signal levers until you have properly communicated with the signalman ahead and been notified by him to send the train on."

The statement of business of the Pennsylvania Railroad company for the month of December and for the twelve months ending Dec. 31, 1895, follow. All lines east of Pittsburg and Erie, month of December.

	1895.	Changes.	
Gross earnings..	$5,629,604	Inc.	$485,815
Op. expenses....	3,939,906	Inc.	335,035
Net earnings....	$1,689,698	Inc.	$150,779
For year ended Dec. 31:			
Gross earnings..	$64,627,175	Inc.	$5,922,894
Op. expenses.....	44,944,368	Inc.	4,580,565
Net earnings...	$19,682,869	Inc.	$1,342,328

All lines west of Pittsburg and Erie report for December: Gross earnings increased $425,264; expenses increased $212,901; net earnings increased $212,362. For twelve months ending Dec. 31: Gross earnings increased $4,591,313; expenses increased $1,821,944; net earnings increased $2,769,369.

The appended figures show the Lackawanna's gross, operating expenses and net per train mile, as follows:

	Gross per train mile.	Op. ex. train mile.	Net per train mile.
1888	$1.527	$0.845	$0.682
1889	1.409	0.854	0.555
1890	1.442	0.850	0.59[illegible]
1891	1.448	0.798	0.6[illegible]
1892	1.475	0.862	0.613
1893	1.519	0.886	0.633
1894	1.427	0.813	0.614

It will be seen that the variation has been comparatively slight;—not more than 11.8c. in the gross per train mile, 8.8c. in the operating expenses per train mile, and 12.7c. in the net per train mile. Other traffic has tended to steady the gross per train mile in face of a heavy fluctuation in coal. A table showing the gross per freight train mile, the rate per ton per mile, and the train load follows:

	Gross per fr. tr. mile.	Rate.	Train load.
1888	$1.722	1.070c.	160
1889	1.511	0.983c.	152
1890	1.552	0.948c.	163
1891	1.528	0.898c.	170
1892	1.549	0.903c.	171
1893	1.602	0.906c.	167
1894	1.509	0.902c.	167

The variation in these figures is surprisingly small considering everything. The fluctuation in the gross per freight train mile is only 21.3c. on seven years, and the fluctuation in the train load is only twenty-four tons.

The four Delaware, Lackawanna and Western men at the Moses Taylor hospital, Brakeman Lawless, Fireman Burkhardt, Brakeman Wardell and Fireman Franz, are improving rapidly under the care of the excellent staff of that institution.

Engineer William Long, who is seriously ill with the grip, was reported as slightly improved yesterday.

CHASED BY MASKED MEN.

Seeks Escape by Leaving His Buggy, but Is Caught, Beaten and Robbed.

Crawfordsville, Ind., Jan. 26.—Dr. Alonzo Brown attended a medical society meeting here last night, and about midnight left in a buggy for his home at Amo. Three miles west of the city he was halted by masked robbers and ordered to dismount, but instead gave his horse a furious cut and started down the road at a break-neck speed. The highwaymen, who were in a light buckboard that they had "borrowed" from a neighboring farmer, gave chase and there ensued a highly exciting race.

Coming within range, the bandits began firing and one bullet pierced the crown of the doctor's hat, but he only crouched down in the buggy and urged his horse the harder. After a two-mile run his horse was nearly fagged out, and seeing a capture a certainty Dr. Brown abandoned the buggy and took to the woods. He was soon overhauled, however, and after being brutally beaten was relieved of his pocket-book, containing $118, and a valuable diamond stud. His watch, with his name engraved thereon, was spared. Dr. Brown reached home in a dazed condition and reported the outrage, but no arrests have been made.