

if I eats green apples, it's bound to give me cramps, but the eating of 'em is my fault, but it ain't my fault I dreamt that dream, and no such dream but's bound to give you indigestion, so to speak.'

'What was it you did dream?' asked Miss Pinky, her curiosity getting the better of her orthodoxy.

'I dreamt that Louis was dead!' replied the widow, looking about her in awe.

'Well, that ain't going to kill him,' smiled Miss Pinky.

'No, it ain't; but I never saw him other than alive before, an' as plain as I see you now, Pinky White, I saw him stretched in his coffin—here the widow broke down and cried a little.

'Now, now, Matty, don't give way to such foolishness,' entreated Miss Pinky. 'Your eatin' for supper mayn't agreed with you.'

'What I eat I prepare myself, and I reckon to cook my victuals wholesome for the digestion,' retorted the widow, a little snap in the tone of her voice.

'It's well known there ain't no better cook in Kentucky State,' Miss Pinky made haste to declare.

The widow sighed. 'It wasn't eatin' as done it, it was a guilty conscience,' she said.

'No, no,' continued the widow, 'you never, no one ever did know the whole truth but Father Browne, God rest his soul! And Father Nelson when he come to take his place. Louis never ran away; I drove him from the shelter his father provided. I drove him from the Clover, that's his home by rights.'

Miss Pinky stared at her friend, not sure but that she was out of her mind. 'How could you do that?' she faltered, scarcely knowing what she said.

'How could I!' cried the widow, 'you may well ask that question, Pinky White! But I did, an' if he's dead for want of anything I could a-helped, I killed him just as sure as if I'd shot him with that rifle of his father's a-hanging over the chimney-piece.'

She paused to take breath, and then hurried on: 'It's ten years ago, come Assumption Day, since I drove him out. You and the folks think me a good woman, me whose heart and soul was set on things of this world to that extent that I drove my only son from me. I was proud of the Clover, proud of what his father and me had made it, but his mind didn't lay that way—he wanted to go to college. First I quarrelled with Father Browne, who sided with Louis, and he died without my ever having made it up with him.' As she continued to speak her voice was choked and sunk to a whisper, so that Miss Pinky, with white face bent forward to catch what she said.

'One day Louis came to me and said Father Browne would get him in a college, if I'd help him a little. I wouldn't listen to him, and I daren't think of the cruel words I said to him, and I told him he'd have to learn to run the Clover or get out of the inn altogether, an' when he said he'd have to go and wanted to explain, I put him out of the house with my own hand. I didn't mean to be harsh with him; I thought I'd scare him and he'd come back in the morning, his will broke. He didn't come, as you well know, an' I got to make myself believe he'd deserted me; and when letters come in his hand write, I burned 'em up, an' then when they didn't come, an' when I'd a-given all I got, an' that a fair fortune, to get news of him, I didn't know where to go to look for him. Punished!' she cried, 'yes, I've been punished, but not above an' beyond my deservin'.'

She lay back in her chair and moaned, and frightened Miss Pinky asked if Father Nelson knew all this that she had been told.

'He does,' said the widow, 'an' for months has been doing all that he could to find track of Louis, but I'm convinced it's no use. If I'd only kept one of them envelopes he sent me with something printed on 'em!' wailed the unhappy woman.

Miss Pinky sat thinking. 'Now, Matty,' she burst out suddenly, 'whatever you may think, I feel Louis is all right; an' for sure if he's on earth, as he certainly is, Father Nelson'll find him.'

Although unconvinced, the widow allowed the prophecy of Miss Pinky to hearten her gradually, and, by the time her visitor rose to leave, she had been

roused to take a fleeting interest in the polka dot calico Miss Pinky had been so anxious to display.

Miss Pinky happened in on her at a moment when she felt keenest the evil wrought by her stubborn, uncurbed will, and her revelation of the truth was made. Not, though, because she hoped to receive from Miss Pinky the condemnation that she felt would be a balm to her in her wretchedness. 'Pinky would only pity one the more, the slimier and deeper down he'd had a fall,' she mused when her friend left her. 'But she's that innocent she'll tell the first one she meets—not that she's a gossip, for never a slanderin' word did trouble her tongue or give speech to her lips. She'll suspicion I'm goin to tell such as drop in to call, an' she'll want to be beforehand with their judgment, making little of what I done, an' strivin' to keep me up in the opinion of all.'

The Widow Robbins was right in her conjecture. Miss Pinky spoke out of a full heart to Mrs. Ouram, whom she met coming in her husband's buggy from Greenbrier. 'I never did see one so broke down, for a fact; an' we're just got to turn in an' give her all the comfort we can, for if it do turn out that Louis has departed this life in peace—an' a better boy than he was in every way I never see—it's just going to break his mother's heart,' asseverated Miss Pinky.

'She'd a right to think of that afore she turned him out on the mercies of a cold and thankless world,' responded Mrs. Ouram. 'Law me, it's like it were yesterday, it's that clear to my mind!' she pursued. 'You remember we all was a-goin' to Miss Norah's school? As sweet and patient a woman as ever lived, an' she with consumption in the blood of her veins a-wearin' herself out! Well, Martha Greene, the Widow Robbins that is, was kep' in for spellin' or maybe 'twas her sums, I don't remember rightly which; and I was keepin' her company for my letters, for I was a little thing, an' Martha was in the graduatin' class. All of a sudden she got up and flung her slate across the room—now I remember 'twas her sums, she'd a had no need for a slate for spellin'—"I won't be kep' in with babies," she says, an' gives me a look that sets me crying—it do make me laugh to think of it now—an' Miss Norah comes an' puts her arms about her, an' says how it's for love of her she insists on the doin' of the sums, for she wants her to shine when she quits school. "I love you, Matty; don't you love your teacher?" she says. "No, I don't! an' I'm goin' to quit school right now!" roared Martha, an' snatched up her sunbonnet an' tears out, an' she never did return no more. It ain't no wonder, with such a temper, she turned Louis out to starve or worse.'

'Oh, but I remember,' pleaded Miss Pinky, 'when Miss Norah got so she could work no more, Matty took her in her best front room, with real checkerberry furniture, an' kep' her till she lay down an' die.'

'I ain't denyin' she's got a good heart when she can put you under obligation to her—but sakes alive! the sun's goin' down, an' I've got Mr. Ouram's light bread to make up for supper. Come up soon, Pinky,' invited Mrs. Ouram cordially, and, whipping up her horse, left Miss Pinky to meander her way home.

That evening a number of Mrs. Ouram's neighbors dropped in to hear the news from Greenbrier, and the story of the evil thing done at the Clover Inn ten years before was related to wondering ears. The next morning the Widow Robbins was abroad early to see about a maid whose services she expected to engage for the inn, and in the averted looks of the few women she met, she read her condemnation. 'Pinky's told,' she thought to herself, and felt a strange humility, a stranger enjoyment, at being at last estimated at her proper worth. Attrition she had known, but the peace of contrition was hers for the first time.

Father Nelson had gone to Louisville to see the Bishop, and incidentally to seek for tidings for Louis Robbins, and, seeing the sexton of the church hurrying down the road in her direction, the widow waited for him under the shade of an oak, to learn if he knew the hour of the priest's return.

The sexton had evidently heard nothing, for as he neared the widow, he bade her a brisk and cheery good-morning. 'An' you're on your way to Mass, ma'am?' he asked.