Action on Dingle Hill

I

Parthenia Davis sat in the kitchen mixing pancake batter for the breakfast meal. It was after nightfall in early August, and the katydids had already begun their evening chorus in the trees outside. The kitchen was lighted by one frugal candle, and the remains of a fire glowed in the huge fireplace which dominated the room. She mixed the buckwheat flour into the batter vigorously. Opposite her at the table sat Sarah Earle, a thinfaced old woman, resting her head on her elbows on the table, her face drawn tightly in a look of desperation and weariness.

"Warren Scudder and Ed O'Connor said they'd be here for breakfast tomorrow, early," Parthenia said. "So I'm mixing more batter than usual."

"Yes," the old woman replied, "They're bringing more trouble for the Earle family."

Parthenia gave the batter a vigorous turn. "They're coming to strike a blow for freedom," she said evenly, implying an argument that had been going on for some time, one she was determined to end.

"You <u>will</u> have your way," the old woman continued, "Moses listens to you and your friends, always."

Parthenia was obviously still trying to end the endless argument. "Oh why do we go on and on. It's all settled. The sale takes place tomorrow. The sheriff will come and try to

sell our cattle. Calico Indians will be all around; they're already gathering in the woods. They will prevent the sale somehow. If Osmond Steele and his posse try to make trouble, they will again be outwitted. If the cattle are sold, Indians will shoot them, and they will compensate us."

"Just like that, you always have an answer," the old lady retorted.

The double kitchen door opened, and Moses Earle and Parthenia's brother Henry Davis entered. Moses was Sarah's husband. Henry worked as hired man, and Parthenia had been adopted when she was very young, to take the place of their one child, who had died.

"It's been a hard day in the fields, and I can't stand such hard work any more," Moses said. "Tomorrow will be just as hard. We better all get to bed." Moses was a bent old man at 64. The life of a tenant farmer had taken its toll.

"Moses, have you thought this thing through?" Sarah asked. "Do you realize that you may lose this farm, just as you are about to retire? You may never enjoy the fruits of your labor."

"I've thought of that till my head aches," Moses replied. "My father cleared this land, and I helped him. We paid in rent twice over what this land is worth. I'm not sure even that the patroons have clear title to the land. They've never submitted proof. Mrs. Verplanck lives in her mansion over on the Hudson, and never set foot here."

"It's not for us humble folks to question the way the world goes," Sarah replied. "I've always said, what can't be cured must be endured. You and I have labored long enough, we got no right to get ourselves involved in this fight."

Parthenia put in a few words at this point: "Granpa Earle fought in the Revolution to set us free. Too many Tories were left with their land after the Revolution. Now we got to complete the job he began."

Moses yawned. "So be it, so be it," he said. "All of us had better get some sleep."

Parthenia at this point lit another candle and went down the steep cellar stairs with the milk pails. There she poured them out into shallow pans, where the milk would stand until the cream had risen to the top. When she came back upstairs, Henry had gone to bed, and she could hear Moses and Sarah moving about in their bedroom, which was the only other room on the main floor of this little house, beside the kitchen and pantry. She then walked out on the porch.

It was a moonlit night. The moonlight fell in silver floods on the rows of hay mowed by the men with their scythes that day. The katydids, harbingers of coming Fall, were stronger than ever. Out on the edge of the field, near the woods, a campfire flickered. The men camping there were farmers who had come to prevent the sale of cattle on the Earle farm. Some had come twenty or thirty miles.

The coming day promised to bring a confrontation on Dingle Hill. The farmers of Delaware County were resolved to pay no more

rent to the patroons, and the Earle sale was a test case. Delaware County was one of the last of the counties to become involved in the anti-rent wars. They were now very much in it. They had built an active anti-rent association, to which tenant farmers paid dues. This association was now strong in 11 counties, where the patroon system flourished.

The anti-rent association had its complement in an underground band of men who donned Indian costumes on occasion and blocked sheriff sales of cattle to pay for rent withheld. The tenant farmers arranged among themselves that they would forego normal use of their dinner horns, and use them only as a summons for all anti-renters to come and resist the sheriff and his men. There had been many occasions when the colico Indians had been very successful. So effective were they that the Governor of the State had a law passed forbidding use of the costumes in public.

The calico Indians were essential to the farmers. These poor farmers had no political power. The courts, law enforcement bodies, and legislators were on the side of the patroons. Money talked. The only way they had of talking back was to use force. The farmers learned to back their rent strike with the calico Indians and it worked, just as it had worked for the patriots in the refusal to pay a tax on tea before the Revolution.

The overall leader of the Indians was Smith A. Boughlon, in Renssalear County. This country doctor was a dedicated leader. As an Indian he was known as Big Thunder. The calico Indians were loosely organized, and each group had its own strategy.

Parthenia stood on the porch for a while, looking out on the moondrenched fields. Then she went out into the kitchen. She could still hear Moses and Sarah in the next room, and she went upstairs to her little cubby of a room with its single bed, its small bookshelf, and table littered with newspapers. There were two anti-rent newspapers there: the Voice of the Anti Renter and Young America. On the little table were several sheets of paper, which Parthenia took into her hands. On them were the beginnings of a poem she was composing. A neighbor, Will Brisbane, an immigrant from Scotland, and a lover of Robert Burns, had introduced her to poetry and encouraged her to try her hand at composing verses. She had many conversations with Brisbane about literature. He was a farmer and an anti-rent lecturer, who lived on Dingle Hill. Only recently had she attempted to write poems, and she intended to show this one to him when she had the chance. She could not recall where she had gotten the first line, but after she had it, the rest of the poem flowed naturally.

How can I keep from thinking, a milking of the cows,
A woman's mind goes wandering, whenever time allows;

How can I keep from thinking, when I'm carding wool?
While nimble hands are busy, a woman's mind is full,
Of reading Greeley's Tribune, where you'll always find,
Strong ideas, like a whetstone, to sharpen up your mind.

How can I keep from thinking, weaving at the loom?
The shuttle darts so swiftly, my mind is free to roam,

Marvelling over modern times, inventions like a dream,
A telegraph, a railroad, and boats that run by steam.

How can I keep from thinking, when thinking gives a thrill,
To be alive and young now, when nothing's standing still.
All my fancies follow me, both in and out of doors,
Till I'm preaching to the oxen, and singing at my chores.

Young America, one of the publications spread out on her table, was the source of much of Parthenia's thinking. The paper was the organ of the National Reform movement, published in New York City, and edited by George Henry Evans. Evans was an agrarian. That was the belief that everyone should have access to the land. With land to escape to, the city person had a way of getting away from the oppression of the city. This access to land was, according to the agrarians, being denied to the tenant farmers of New York State. Many of them had cleared the land, and several generations had lived on it, yet they could not own it. Free land was also denied the frontiersmen of that time. The Agrarians made their belief a social philosophy. But Young America did more than explain the agrarian approach. On the pages of this paper were articles telling about the bad working conditions of various kinds of city workers, articles about the Molly Maguires, a secret union of working people in Pennsylvania. There were also articles mentioning Brook Farm, an experimental community near Boston, and articles condemning slavery.

The next morning Warren Scudder and Ed O'Connor rode up to the Earle farmhouse just as the sun was poking over the top

of Dingle Hill. The two anti-rent leaders tied their horses to the fence and came over the dew-laden grass to the porch, where Moses Earle greeted them.

Warren Scudder, the elder of the two came up the porch steps with his characteristic swinging gait. He walked with a loose easy stride, that immediately distinguished him from others. He had a bushy red beard and moustache. His eyes were deep and thoughtful, and he seemed to be a man much at ease with himself and the world. He was leader of the Delaware anti-rent association, a person who could give orders with ease and decision. Ed O'Connor was a younger man, just beginning to farm on his own. He had a quick wit, loved to fiddle and sing. He was a loyal follower of Warren Scudder.

As they walked into the house, Parthenia greeted them with a huge platter of buckwheat pancakes, which she set on the table before them. They sat down quickly, and with few words dug into the heap, and soon finished their breakfast. Parthenia hovered over them, after they had finished their breakfast, listening to their conversation, and partaking occasionally.

"Several groups of Indians spent the night in the woods," she said.

"Yes," Warren Scudder said, "And the first thing I must do is to send a little group of riflemen down the road to watch for Osmond Steele and his possee. He's the trouble maker."

To Moses, Scudder said: "We'll work together on this, Moses. I want you to know that we'll keep you out of this. We'll let Sheriff Morse sell the cattle, if he does it according

to law. As soon as a cow is sold, an Indian will shoot it dead. And our insurance policy will repay you for every cow shot."

"What a shame," Sarah said, "to shoot those good cows."

"May it never come to that," Moses said. "Sarah and I are too old to get into such a mess."

Before he left Warren came into the kitchen and said to Parthenia: "Do you think Moses will stick?"

"I think so," Parthenia replied. "He and Sarah are both very upset, but I think Moses will remain firm."

"He'd better," Scudder said, "If he gives in and pays that rent, we are lost."

"You can count on me to do all I can," Parthenia replied.

"I know," Scudder said. "I wish we had more people as courageous as you."

Parthenia blushed at Scudder's praise. It was seldom that anyone expressed such wholehearted praise of her. Her social concerns went beyond the battle of the farmers for the right to own their land. She believed in an agrarian philosophy, that went beyond the immediate problems of Delaware County, to the concerns of the whole country. The principle of free land, not just for New York State farmers, but for immigrants to Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin concerned her. Most people Parthenia knew did not see the broad implications of their fight. Warren Scudder was one of those who had a broad view, and she valued his praise.

It was very hard for her to go to work after the two men left. She wanted to be where things were going to happen, to

have a part in making them happen. She could see more and more Indians going back into the woods. Henry and the hired man were out in the hayfield as usual. Moses sat on the porch watching them. And Parthenia remained in the kitchen.

At ten o'clock Sheriff Green More arrived with Peter Wright, agent for Charlotte Verplanck, the patroon. They were gentlemen, dressed in city clothes, and they ceremoniously took off their high beaver hats as they came up the walk. Parthenia brought out a chair for Sarah, who joined Moses on the porch, and Parthenia went back to the kitchen.

"Good morning, Mr. and Mrs. Earle," More said. "I see you got company this morning."

"It's a good day for haying," Moses replied. "Dew's off the grass now."

"I don't mean the men haying," the sheriff said. "We came over the mountain from Shavertown. Ahead of us rode the roughest bunch of Indians I've ever seen. Said they came over here for a fight. It's them I mean."

Wright then got down to business. "This is your last chance, Mr. Earle," he said. "We have to know where you stand." He reached into his vest pocket and pulled out a letter. "Did you sign this letter saying you were willing to pay?"

Moses nodded. "Yes, I did sign that letter. But since, I've changed my mind. You'll have to take out the rent in property."

More replied: "See here, Mr. Earle. I knew your father who cleared this land, and I've known you for years. You and he

worked hard for everything you have. If you follow your present course, you are likely to lose it all. If Osmund Steele comes up, and his posse tangles with the Indians on your property, there'll be plenty of trouble for you."

"Moses, please listen to the man," Sarah implored.

Moses stroked his beard, and was silent for a moment. Then he went into the house and rummaged on a shelf near the fireplace. He found his wallet, and started for the door.

At that moment, Parthenia stuck her head through the kitchen door. "What are you doing, Moses?" she asked.

"I decided to pay the rent," he replied.

"And go back on your neighbors," she exclaimed. "That would be cowardly. You just can't do it, Moses." With that she reached over, seized the wallet and put it safely in the bosom of her dress.

Moses stood looking at her for a moment. Then he walked out on the porch and said, "I guess you'll have to sell."

More got up hastily and put on his beaver hat. His voice was intended to be calm, but it rose perceptibly. "Mr. Earle, you've made a hard bed for yourself, but you'll have to lie on it. Come, Mr. Wright, we have no more business here. Let's go up and look over the cattle in the pasture."

Wright, who followed him, could not refrain from a dig at Parthenia. "So you let that hired girl tell you what to do. She's full of agrarian ideas, and you are foolish to listen to her."

To which Moses replied: "The Lord took our only child, and left us Parthenia and she's like an adopted daughter. She

has the right to speak her mind, and I'm entitled to her advice."

It was hard for Parthenia to stay inside the house after that passage. Hard for her to reconcile herself to the woman's place. It would have been unseemly for her to have gone out and mingled with the men and boys who were watching the affair. But that was what she wanted most to do. She had often wished she were a man, but never with the insistency of this time.

At noontime Sarah and Parthenia sent their mutton stew and bread out to the Indians in the woods. And about one o'clock Warren Scudder led his Indian army out across the fields. Scudder was dressed in a suit of flaming scarlet, with a sash around his middle, carrying an old Revolutionary War sword. Behind him in single file came over 200 men dressed in fantastic homemade calico costumes, sewed together by the womenfolk of their families. Their faces were covered by grotesque masks, ingenuously decorated. Often they had a pair of cows horns glued to the masks, and carried a cow's tail sewed to their behind. Weapons were whatever the farmers could muster: a pistol, a musket, or even a pitch-fork or broadaxe. They strode triumphantly across the field and lined up along the road in front of the house.

Moses left the porch at that time, and brought a pail of whiskey out, and passed it along the line of men.

Pater Wright stood it as long as he could, then walked down the line of masked men, peering into their eyes, trying to identify them.

"You fellow are liable to arrest. I know you."

"No you don't," an Indian replied.

"Yes and I shall remember you."

"You can't swear to it."

When he reached the center of the line, he confronted Scudder, sternly brandishing his sword. Scudder shouted, "Stand back you Tory."

Wright whipped out his pistol. "Withdraw your sword, or I'll make a hole through you. I'll not stand back an inch for you or your tribe."

Scudder withdrew his sword and reached within the fold of his cloak and pulled out a pistol. "Damn the patroon's law," he shouted. "We have our rights as freemen and we mean to protect them. I got a gun as well as you."

Just then there was a blast of a dinner horn, down the mountain, where the band of Indian riflemen were waiting for Steele. He was the man most hated by the Indians. Contemptuous of the farmers, he had waged war on them for several years. He generally rode through the countryside at the head of a posse of men, but today he appeared with only one--Erastus Edgerton.

Steele was a burly, redheaded and quite handsome man, and he rode a fine sorrel horse. There was general surprise when he came up the road without his usual posse.

Green More said to him, "Where are your men?"

"I don't need a posse," Steele replied, "All we need here is a show of courage."

At this point an Indian called out, "Steele, here is an Indian alone. Come and pull my cap off."

Steele ignored the taunt, and shouted, "I command every citizen here to assist me in the preservation of peace."

There was a moment of silence, then a few men separated from the crowd of onlookers and stationed themselves near Steele's horse. The rest looked on indifferently.

"We will now proceed to auction off the property," Steele said. "I bid all of you to help me in the conduct of my duty."

With that Steele, onlookers and the rest moved up the road, beyond the barn, to the barway along the road which led to the pasture where the cows were grazing. Parthenia, Sarah and Moses remained on the porch.

At that moment Will Brisbane came along riding on a wagon. He hitched his horses to the fence near the house.

He came up on the porch. "I was down in Andes this morning," he said. "Steele was in Hunting's tavern, drinking all morning. They said he poured powder in his whiskey and said, 'Now lead can never kill Steele.' That man is in no condition to conduct a sale. He's half drunk."

"Better get over there quick," Moses said. "You'll be needed."

Will went up the road and joined the group.

"Moses, you better go up too, and talk to the sheriff again," Sarah implored.

"It's too late now," Parthenia said.

The three sat on the porch by themselves. Everybody else was up the road, near the barway. They could not see what was

going on up there, because of the distance and the crowd that milled about.

Suddenly there was a gunshot, then another, and another. Parthenia felt a shudder through her body with each gunshot. She sank back on her chair. Then a man came running down the road shouting, "Get a bed ready. They wounded Steele and shot his horse."

Sarah rose from her chair. "God help us now."

In a few minutes Brisbane and John Calhoun, an anti-rent doctor, came into the house, carrying the body of Steele. They took him up the porch steps, and with Parthenia's directions carried him into the Earle bedroom, and laid him on the bed. Parthenia rummaged in the kitchen and came up with some material for bandages. At Dr. Calhoun's request she brought in a bottle of vinegar. Calhoun rubbed the wounded man's temples with vinegar and treated the wounds.

After examining the man, Calhoun announced that Steele was struck by two bullets, one passing through the fleshy part of his right breast, the other through his abdomen.

Steele was in intense pain. At one point he cried out, "Oh cut my throat and put me out of pain." Sheriff More was standing at the foot of the bed and he took one of the wounded man's legs on his shoulder to ease the pain. Steele asked another man to take the other foot.

The room quickly filled with people. Someone inquired who fired the first shot, to which the reply was "The Indians."

"No," someone said, "It was Steele."

"Steele, did you fire first?" Wright asked. The wounded man cried in pain, and Wright repeated his question, "Steele, did you fire first?"

"Yes, I fired," Steele replied. Then a moment later he murmured, "Lord have mercy on my sould. Oh, my poor wife."

"Your wife will be cared for and provided for," Wright replied. At one point Steele looked up at Moses, standing over him, and said: "Old man, if you had paid your rent there would have been none of this. I wouldn't have been shot."

"If you had stayed at home and minded your own business you would not have been shot," Moses corrected gravely. "I have paid rent long enough. Until I know what I pay for, I shall pay no more if I can help it. If they show me their title, I will pay every cent of the rent, but if they mean to bully me out of it, I will not pay if it costs forty lives."

"I wish I could have been at the bars," said the sheriff. "I think I could have prevented all this. It was most reckless of Edgerton to rush into the Indians."

Wright said to Brisbane and Dr. Calhoun: "I think there would have been no difficulty if Edgerton had not acted as he did."

Steele's life ebbed rapidly. About seven that evening his wife, a sister and an uncle, Dr. Ebeneezer Steele, arrived from Delhi. Soon after the last shafts of sunlight had withdrawn from Dingle Hill, leaving a blaze of red, Osmond Steele died.

Moses Earle's face remained impassive. "We were born to a world of trouble. It is the Lord's will that it should be so."

As Mrs. Steele sobbed over her husband's body, Moses walked to the dead man's uncle and offered his hand.

"It was a very hard case," the doctor remarked.

"I do not know," answered Moses, "He was created for the very course he has taken. He was ordained to die that way."

"You must be a fatalist," the doctor remarked curiously.

"The Almighty makes no mistakes," the old man replied.

When Steele lay wounded in the Earle house the Indians were anxious to get early information about his condition, and for that purpose Warren Scudder sent Malcolm Monroe into the house to learn what he could. Malcolm was a youth of fifteen, who worshipped Scudder. He had often heard his father and mother compare Scudder to Rob Roy, an outlaw in Western Scotland, where they had lived before they migrated to America. Rob Roy was a man who had been dispossessed of his land. Malcolm came into the house, and whispered to Parthenia, who told him that Steele had very little time left. The relatives and others in the bedroom thought Malcolm was a member of the Earle family. He quickly left and told his chief the bad news. Scudder immediately ordered the Indians to "split and squander," which they did.

II

Up rent Delhi made a hero and a martyr of Osmond Steele. While anti-renters were singing "Steele is dead and gone to Hell" uprenters had a dirge that began:

Lamented Steele, well may we weep,
Oer they untimely grave;
The angels round shall vigil keep
Thou fearless one and brave.

Three preachers spoke at Steele's funeral services, extolling this man whose only crime, they said, was the faithful discharge of his duty. Many a Delhi man incited by the inflamatory orations took up his gun and joined the posse. The villagers were being told that the farmers with 500 men were massing to attack the town. Frederick Steele got leave from the U.S. Army to lead a posse to avenge his brother's death. James Howe, a brother-in-law, headed a posse, as did Tom Corbin, who was still smarting from the indignity of a coat of tar given him by the Indians when he had tried to make some arrests in behalf of the patroons.

Silas Wright, governor of New York State, on August 27, twenty days after the incident on Dingle Hill, with the Indians in complete rout, and with 100 farmers already incracerated in the three log jails, declared Delaware County in a state of rebellion, and sent 300 troops to the already armed village.

Delhi took on the character of a western town during a gold rush. Daily the stages rumbled in, bringing lawyers, hired

by relatives, newspaper men and visitors. Shysters, prostitutes, gamblers came into town. The broad sidewalks were jammed with pedestrians all day long. The three log houses built as prisons for the farmers filled up rapidly. They were one of the main sights for visitors.

The press did its part in whipping up hysteria. A correspondent for Thurlow Weed's Evening Journal wrote that Moses Earle, "who had the coolness and inhumanity of a fiend," had far better be dead than alive, as he must, dying every day. "Oh, if there is justice in Heaven, may we not hope that these murderers will be punished." Another said, "Steele could not have found a more glorious grave on any field where glory is won." Horace Greeley was one important publicist who refused to run with the hounds. He had said from the start that the farmers had serious grievances, and now he didn't change his tune. For that he was excoriated by the other papers, and declared guilty of "Fourierism, agrarianism, and infidelity."

In the days following the death of Steele, the Indians scattered to the four winds. Some left New York State, others secreted themselves in wild and remote regions, living in caves or shelters of some kind. Some hid close to home. Many of the anti-renters had comfortable chambers in the belly of the haymow, reached by a narrow tunnel through the hay, which could be reached by someone who knew the right two boards to remove in the side wall. Once inside, the hunted men could conceal the entrance by stuffing the tunnel with hay.

And of course about of them got caught and were taken to Delhi to stand trial.

One afternoon, soon after the death of Steele, Parthenia heard a clatter of hooves on the road, and ran to a window. "The posse," she exclaimed to Sarah, who was sitting near the fire. "Moses is out in the barn. I'll run down the road and alert Richard Morse. We'll need him."

She put on her shawl and ran to the door. There she met Tim Corbin, coming up the steps.

"Where's Moses," he asked, pointing his pistol at her.

"Are ye warring on women now?" she asked, brushing aside the pistol.

"Ye'll have to find Moses." With that she ran down the path to the road, and down the road to the foot of Dingle Hill, to the home of Richard Morse.

Richard Morse was a solid anti-renter, a person with legal knowledge, who was a Justice of Peace, but who had never passed the bar examination. He was Captain of a rifle company, and Secretary to the Anti-rent Association. Everybody in the community respected him. He was out in the barn, hitching up his horse when Parthenia came. "I saw the posse go up the hill," he told her. "And I thought I'd be needed. I'll follow them to Delhi."

Parthenia felt a great sense of relief, after she had spoken to Morse. They would examine Moses probably and send him home that same day. But she was very disturbed when she passed the posse, bringing Moses down from Dingle Hill. They

had Moses riding on a broken down old nag. He smiled wanly as he passed by. There was an air of puzzlement in his face, and Parthenia was to see that look often thereafter.

The posse taking Moses Earle to Delhi stopped in Andes and met up with another posse which had arrested Will Brisbane. The two men were put in a wagon and taken to Delhi. Richard Morse was arrested, even though he had not been on Dingle Hill on the day of Steele's death. He spent that night in jail, and there was no chance for him to give advice to Moses.

So complete was the disappearance of many of the Indians that community life stopped in the rural areas of Delaware County. Harvests remained ungathered. "Hay that was heaped together on that morning, lay rotting in the fields unmade and unshocked," reported one newspaper. "Fields of grain have ripened and fallen down because the reapers are fugitives from Justice." Posses run roughshod over the farms, pillaging and destroying. "They go to the people's houses at night and take the men, if they find any, lead them with chains, filling the wagons, some of them without hats, coats or shoes, and they will drag them around in that condition in the hot sun all day" said one letter writer. "If they don't find them in their beds, they drive their boyonets through everything in the house. . . . If they are anti-renters that is sufficient. They destroy their property; they go to their milk cellars, upset the milk and destroy their victuals, ride through the fields of grain. . . ."

The little farm villages, mainly populated by anti-renters, were dead. In Bovina, New Kingston, Roxbury, Shavertown and Andes

normal life ceased. Churches stood empty. The schoolhouse stayed locked. The cooper shop, gristmill, and blacksmith shops were deserted. Singing school did not open that fall. That was Parthenia's main source of recreation during the winter months.

For Parthenia life was very barren and harsh after Moses was dragged off to jail. Being at home with Sarah was very difficult. Sarah could not forget the part that Parthenia had played on the day of Steele's death, and she took every occasion to berate her about it. Parthenia fled to the barn and the fields to escape Sarah's querelous complaints. It was easy to find reasons for being outside, but there was always a certain amount of housework that Parthenia could not avoid. Parthenia had hoped that fall to become a teacher in the Shavertown school, but word had come to her that their school too was not opening. So Parthenia was doomed to spend the winter with Mrs. Earle, the target of her cutting remarks and victim of her own sense of guilt.

The only time when the burden seemed to lift for a while was when she worked on her poems or read her papers. She began to work on a poem depicting the Reign of Terror on Dingle Hill.

Who plows on Dingle Hill?
Where can the menfolks be?
The wheat rots on the stalk
The scythe rusts in the tree.

The women drive the oxen,
And swing the heavy flail;

While menfolk hide in caves,
Or sit in Delhi Jail.

The posse spreads its terror,
Its horses galloping by
To search for fugitives,
Or trample down the rye.

Parthenia wanted to share her poetic efforts with someone. But there was no one around who would listen. Not Henry, who continued to be interested only in the cattle, and in getting in the hay. Certainly not Sarah, who became more hostile every day. Will Brisbane would be the ideal person. Did he not read Tam O'Shanter, To a Mouse, and many of Burn's other poems to her? He would be delighted to hear what she had written. But he was in jail, Moses was in jail, and everybody else whom Parthenia highly respected. That one day on Dingle Hill wrenched the course of her life out of its usual direction, and everything was different.

The visits to Moses usually were unsatisfactory. There was always the long trip to Delhi, the interminable wait at the jail, and then the short visit, during which Moses had very little to say. On one trip Mrs. Brisbane came along with them, and the addition of Will Brisbane to the visit made it a success. Brisbane was in good spirits, could talk with wry humor about what was happening and he infused the meeting with life.

At the coroner's inquest they tried to get Brisbane to change his testimony. "They told me what I had done, that day,

and it was very different from what I actually did. I remember that day clearly, from the very beginning. I came up Dingle Hill just about a half hour before Steele was shot. Gideon McCumber rode alongside the wagon and we sang an old country song about a young man getting enlisted."

"Yes," Parthenia said, "Then you stopped for just a moment at the house."

"This is the way the inquest went," Will continued. "In Spain it would be called an Inquisition. District Attorney Hughston struck the table with his hand and greeted me with the accusation, 'Damn you, you was at the Earle sale.' Then four or five of them put questions to me so that I became confused. They never wanted the truth about that day," Brisbane went on. "When I first came to jail they said I had Steele's pistol. They taunted me about the influence I had with the anti-renters. 'If you had only wagged your fingers that day,' they told me, 'Steele would not have been shot.' When I came before the Grand Jury, the principle question asked me was, 'Did you hear Steele say he fired or not.' I said that he very plainly and positively said he fired first. They called me a villain and said I was the only one in twenty who swore to such an oath."

"Moses has gotten most of the abuse in prison," Brisbane said. "He always receives it with perfect calmness. I am next in their hate. They would come and damn me for a foreign bastard. Many times they said, 'Bring him out and hang him without judge or jury.' Another came and said: 'Brisbane you

are poor and we will scatter your family to the four winds of heaven.' Time passes slowly with us; having few books to read, we resort to various petty expedients to beguile the time: such as pitching cents into an old shoe. I am working on a ballad about our friend Timothy Corbin, and the time the calico Indians tarred and feathered him."

As the trial unfolded in Delhi, it was very apparent that the landowners and their agents, the sheriffs, were completely in control of the situation. They dictated the kind of justice that would be meted out to the 240 farmers crowded into the three log jails in Delhi. Judge Amasa J. Parker conducted the trials, and he was on the landlord's side from the very beginning. In his address to the jury, he condemned the farmers and praised the posses that swept through the country, arresting anybody who in any way was connected with the anti-rent cause. It mattered not whether they had been on Dingle Hill on that fateful day. The jurors, he ruled, must be people who had no material interest in leased land. That ruled out any anti-renters, and assured that the jury would be drawn from that part of the country that supplied law and order posses for the sheriff and his men. By making this decision the judge ruled out the possibility of a balanced jury.

In his charge to the jury, Judge Parker made it impossible for the jurors to come to an honest decision. He reasoned that any man armed and disguised at the sale was liable to a year in state prison, under the State anti-disguise law. The law

defined this offense as a misdemeanor, but under the existing code of statutes any crime punishable by state prison was a felony, and death resulting from the commission of a felony was murder. Therefore every one of the two hundred and fifty farmers crammed into the Delhi jail was guilty of murder, under the Judge's definition. This meant that Judge Parker was on the road to becoming an American Jeffrey, which referred to a judge in England who sentenced to death a thousand men involved in Monmouth's rebellión.

The first man to be tried under this formula was Jon Van Steenbergh, a twenty year old farmer, a protege of Ed O'Connor. He was an honest and hard working young man, very inarticulate, and uneducated, a product of leasehold privation. He had no powerful friends who could raise a big fuss about his sentencing, an ideal person for Judge Parker to seize upon as an example for the rest. He was found guilty, and convicted of murder.

Even the up-rent grand jury could not stomach sentencing Van Steenbergh to death on such flimsy ground. They immediately appealed to Governor Wright in his behalf: "The undersigned members of the jury of Jon Van Steenbergh, convicted as one of the murderers of Osmond N. Steele . . . do respectively recommend him as fit subject for your clemency." Although the petition was signed by all twelve, the Governor did not reply.

The next case to be tried was handled differently. Brisbane was an intelligent person, a man who was very capable of arguing his own case very effectively. He would have to be

handled differently also because he was not in Indian costume on that day on Dingle Hill.

"I was taken from my cell," he wrote, "and brought before the American Jeffreys, Judge Parker." This was at 9 AM and the judge ordered him to be ready to go on trial at 2 PM. "Thus," observed Brisbane, "five hours was allowed me to subpoena my witnesses and prepare for trial."

"This was the noblest Roman of them all," observed the Herald Reporter as Brisbane spoke. "He looked indeed a hero, erect, proud and undaunted. His eyes flashed with indignation like an imprisoned eagle's. When the court asked if he had a counsel, he drew himself up proudly to his full height, looked the judge boldly and sternly in the face, and with a firm tone and broad Scotch accent, inquired--'How can I obtain counsel or anything else, while cooped up in yonder jail?'"

Brisbane was given a lawyer, and that lawyer arranged with the judge for a plea of manslaughter. Otherwise he would have been also accused of murder, even though he had not been a Calico Indian, and was guilty of neither manslaughter or murder. Thus his trial was avoided.

Moses Earle was the next case. John Van Buren, son of Martin Van Buren, had at that point arrived in Delhi to become prosecuting attorney. He was a young, eager man, very much on the make, and determined to add to his laurels by convicting Moses Earle of murder. He was sure he could convict, and in that atmosphere he probably could.

The public anger at Moses Earle had not abated. He was pictured as a cool headed monster. Judge Parker, however, felt that the most that could be charged against the old man was a misdemeanor. Actually the only things he had done that day were to feed the Indians, refuse to pay rent, and tell the landlord's agent he would have to fight for it. Since John Van Buren held out for murder, Mitchell Sanford, chief attorney of the anti-rent counsel, was persuaded to enter a hasty plea for manslaughter. This position was criticized by many anti-renters; but he told them he had to do it to save Moses Earle's life. To the court Sanford spoke eloquently:

> I warn the landlords that unless they yield to the men in their just and equal rights, in the spirit of conciliation, kindness and forebearance, there will come down upon them . . . a storm of indignation that will sweep them away forever. I must confess that my sympathies have been strongly excited by the scenes I have witnessed since I came to this place, and I would despise myself if I did not sympathise with and pity the aged and widowed mothers of some of these prisoners who have come twenty miles on foot without a shilling to pay expenses and see their sons in jail awaiting trial.

While the question of his trial hung in balance, Moses, tried beyond endurance by harsh treatment, was subjected to further indignity. One day his cell door opened and James Howe came to see him. Howe was brother-in-law of Osmond Steele. He

was leader of one of the ruthless posses that devastated the countryside.

"I am part owner of the horse that Steele was riding on the day of his death," Howe explained. "And I demand payment of $187 for that horse."

"I'm a poor old man," Moses said. "Why do you come to me? If anyone is responsible, it is the Indians, who shot the horse."

"It was your action that day that led to the death of the horse," Howe said. "If you pay, things will go easier for you and the others."

"Let me have time to consider this matter," Moses said. "Partheny Davis will be coming to see me, and I'd like to talk it over with her."

"There is no possibility of delay. I must have my answer right now," Howe insisted. "Just sign this note, and I won't bother you any more."

So Moses put his scrawled signature on the note. On that same day that he pled manslaughter to avoid a charge of murder.

The next day the Albany Argus reported: "Moses Earle has made his will. He does not expect to receive much leniency, and ought not to."

Edward O'Connor steadfastly refused to plead manslaughter. It was established that he was there on Dingle Hill on the day of the sale, in Indian uniform, and according to the Judge's

formula, was guilty of murder along with all the others. He was told that he was "fit to die," and that officials would gladly "wade in his blood." He realized that they were all united against him, and that there was no chance of winning. But he would not go along with any subterfuge. He insisted on trial.

The court kept him waiting, hoping that he would in time change his mind and plead manslaughter. But he did not. Early in October he got his trial. Judge Parker used the same tenuous line of reasoning he had used for Van Steenbergh and for many others. Again the jury convicted. But again, as in the case of Van Steenburgh, they petitioned Governor Wright for mercy:

> The proof was clear and positive that he was not one of those who shot. . . . The court charged the jury that all the disguised and armed persons, numbering some 240, who were on the ground . . . were engaged in felony, and therefore guilty of murder, and upon charge we found the prisoner guilty. There was nothing in the evidence to warrant the belief that he anticipated, encouraged, or approbated the firing on, or killing of Steele, or anyone else . . . . His character from youth up . . . was proven to have been good . . . . The evidence that he was among the disguised persons . . . was not positive. . . .

Again, there was no reply from the Governor.

Judge Parker set Saturday, October 11, 1845 as the day for giving sentences. There were nearly 240 cases, and that

promised to be a full day's work. A neighbor came in and did the milking, and Parthenia, Henry and Sarah started in for Delhi at 6 in the morning. They arrived at 9 o'clock, and found most of the seats already taken by the people of Delhi, for whom this was the final day of a great circus.

It was a dismal day. "All nature seemed to be in mourning," Brisbane wrote. "The wind sighed mournfully, as it swept the trees; the yellow leaves trembled and fell to the ground; the rain fell in torrents; yes, the very heaven seemed to weep over our misfortune."

On the way to the courthouse Sarah often expressed her hope that at the last moment the Judge might become compassionate and give Moses a light sentence. "He must see that Moses is different from the others," she said. "Moses never believed in this Indian stuff, and he should be treated differently."

Parthenia for her part tried to see the whole affair in terms of a struggle of ideas. She could see the anti-rent agitation as continuation of the struggle of the Revolution. "Grandfather Earle fought at White Plains and at Trenton, in the hardest years of the war," she said. "Many people were not convinced that the country should be freed from England. As the war went on, more people came to think as George Washington did. And some of the people who came over were Tories, and they came over to Washington because he was winning. They never believed in equality, and they still don't. That's why we have this struggle, Moses and the rest are really carrying out the ideas of the Revolution."

Neither Sarah nor Henry responded to Parthenia's arguments, and in the final stages of the trip all three relapsed into silence.

Young Jon Van Steenburgh was the first anti-renter to be sentenced.

"The court entertains no doubt of your guilt," Parker said. ". . . you have but a short time to live. It is not necessary now to admonish you of your relations to your awful situation. There are others who will see that you have every opportunity to prepare for your final end. It is the judgment of the court that you be taken hence to the place whence you came, and that on the twenty-ninth day of November you be taken to the place of execution and hung until you are dead."

The next was O'Connor, who stood tall and proud before the Judge.

"I have known your family for many years," the Judge told him. "You are a man of more intelligence than Van Steenbergh; you are young and possessed of abilities; and you have respectable connections; you are therefore less excusable. You are to be cut off in early life from friends, from kindred, from the world. . . . You have but a few days to live. It is your duty to improve the time, and prepare for death; an awful change awaits you and we trust you will take advantage of the means in your power to prepare for that change."

O'Connor stood, outwardly unmoved by the words. Then he turned and looked over the packed courtroom.

"Remember, my friends," he said quietly and proudly, "I died an innocent man."

His eyes were clear, he spoke with a firm definite voice. Tears stood in the eyes of many spectators.

The next to come up was Moses Earle. He was bowed and looked many more than his sixty-four years. He seemed to be at the end of his endurance as he appealed to Judge Parker for mercy.

"I hope Your Honor will consider me and do me all the good you can," he said wearily. "And I hope that God in Heaven will reward you for it. I hope that you will try to get me a pardon that I may return to my companion. I am an old man."

Judge Parker was not moved by this plea. "It was the course taken by you that led to the death of Steele. . . . We must sentence you to State prison for life. You will therefore be cut off from your family and from society and the public will hereafter be secured from the presence of one who is guilty of so great a crime."

Judge Parker next sentenced Will Brisbane to seven years in jail. In sentencing him the Judge remarked that he was a foreigner, and said, "Your whole life could not atone for the injury and injustice you have done to society. You must be separated from your wife and children." At that point Brisbane burst into tears.

Brisbane had come to America in search of freedom, but had found it a crime to fight great political power. "I feel very proud of the country that gave me birth," he said. "The

pages of its history are adorned with the names of a Wallace, a Burns and a Scott. I will ever feel proud of my Scottish birth."

The American Jeffreys record at the end of that session stood: O'Connor and Van Steenbergh, sentenced to death; Moses Earle, Daniel W. Squires, Daniel Northrup and Zera Preson, sentenced to life imprisonment; Calvin Madison, ten years; William Brisbane, John Phoenix, Isaac Burhans, John Burch, William Reside, John Lathan and Charles McCumber, seven years each; William C. Jocelyn, two years. Fifty-one others paid fines ranging from twenty-five to five hundred dollars or received suspended sentences. The remaining prisoners were released with an admonition to cease "illegal resistance."

Richard More, neighbor of the Earles, was never tried for conspiracy. The case against him was eventually squashed.

Warren Scudder went into hiding. A reward for his capture was posted, and he escaped, concealed in a peddlar's cart, hid among tinware and Yankee notions.

After the sentencing Parthenia was, for a while, more bewildered and confused than ever. She had never realized the cost of freedom, in the face of privilege that has fattened for centuries. She had not considered how deeply the patroon system had holed itself in the American soil, and how severe the fight would become before it was uprooted. The rage that swept the country against the anti-rent movement had been something awesome and frightening. How could so many people be fooled for so long?

The reign of terror, with all the brutality and hardship which it loosened in the countryside, caused her to reexamine her beliefs. She emerged from this period of confusion more firm and directed than ever. The job that needed to be done, she realized, was for people wherever they are, whoever they are, to speak the truth. If that happened, no matter how small the individual's part might be, the accumulated sum of it might turn the world.

The immediate job was to infuse a new note into the politics of the region. But the Voice of the Anti-renter and Young America stressed the campaign to build a party of agrarians, who would free the prisoners, and go on to the bigger job of abolishing all monopoly.

III

Silas Wright, Governor of New York State in 1845, was determined to crush the anti-rent movement. That is why he had a law passed banning the public wearing of calico costumes. That law inspired the landlords and their henchmen, the sheriffs, to initiate campaigns against the militant farmers. The most repressive of these drives occurred in Delaware County after the killing of Steele, but they also broke out in other anti-rent areas. Woodstock saw a group of anti-renters jailed, and in Renssalear County they went after Smith A. Boughton again, the overall leader of the movement. The excesses in Delaware County especially aroused public reaction, and the reversal of public mood threatened to turn votes away from the Democratic party. Only candidates for minor offices were being elected in '45, but that election would indicate the trend of voting, and might affect the election of '46, when Wright would be up for re-election.

All of this impelled the Democratic party, the majority group, to change its tune, and on the surface at least to become more friendly to the anti-renters. They started a campaign to convince the farmers that the Democratic party was their best friend.

One day while Parthenia was preparing supper, she looked out to see Tim Corbin hitching his horse to the fence along the road. She told Sarah and the two watched him come up the walk and knock at the door.

"Mrs. Earle, I know what you've been through," Tim said as he entered the house. "It must be very sore for you to be deprived of your life mate."

"Oh, everything reminds me of Moses," Sarah exclaimed. "I came across his greatcoat the other day, the one he wore to meetings. I broke down and cried. It's awful when old folks have to cry."

"Let's hope he'll be restored to you some day," Tim said.

Here Parthenia could not remain quiet. "Mr. Corbin, if you're looking for fugitives, there ain't any hiding here. I'm surprised you'd come up on Dingle Hill without your posse."

"Now just hold on, young lady," Corbin replied. "You know the Good Book says, Judge not, that ye be not judged. Hear me out. True I did visit Dingle Hill last Fall on some unpleasant journeys, but that is all over. That was in line of duty, orders of Sheriff Morse. That's all bygones now, and all of us are interested in saving O'Connor and Van Steenburgh's lives. After that we'll work on the other sentences. I was up to Albany yesterday on a visit to my good friend, the Governor. Just for the purpose of impressing on him he must save the lives of O'Connor and Van Steenbergh after election."

"Oh, what did the Governor say?" Sarah asked.

"After the election he'll commute the death sentences," Corbin promised.

"If he were concerned about the men, he'd change their sentences now," Parthenia said. "I think he's just concerned about the elections."

"Don't take such a hard view," Corbin replied. "He's a merciful man."

"Mr. Corbin, I put my trust in the Governor," Sarah said.

After Tim Corbin finally left, and supper was finished, Parthenia went upstairs and put finishing touches on her next poem, which dealt with the coming elections. She put it in an envelope and the next day Henry mailed it for her in Andes. She sent it, as usual, to the voice of the Anti-renters:

Make haste to the polls in the morning,
At dawning be up and away.
Muster your friends and your neighbors
For this must be victory day.
We're done with the masks and the feathers,
Farewell to the Indian band;
The ballot will be our one weapon,
We'll cast our vote for free land.

We've done with the masks and the feathers
That put the patroons in such great fright,
And we're off to the town in our wagons
We won't be home until night.
We'll vote for our hills and our valleys,
Our rivulets, our rocks and our trees;
We'll vote for those candidates only
Who'll set our prisoners free.

That fall there was an election rally in Andes. It was a small meeting, compared with anti-rent affairs in the past. There were no Indians marching down the streets, and many faces were absent. But the speaker was a tried and true friend of

the farmers, General Erastus Root. Root spoke on the equality of human rights. He said: "Equality of human rights is a fundamental principle of popular government. Whenever the equal rights of men are in any way infringed and withheld, it becomes the duty of every friend to exercise his political power to unite with his fellows to obtain redress." Root pled for the election of anti-rent candidates, and support for the convention to amend the State Constitution.

At that rally the audience sang Parthenia's anti-rent song, which had been put to music.

Election day finally came. The anti renters had been very busy, and even the people of Delhi were interested in the anti-rent cause. On election day, before daylight, a farm wagon driven by Bob Brisbane stopped at the Earle home. Bob jumped out and called for Henry. "He's out in the barn, milking," Parthenia said. Bob came in and had a cup of coffee with Parthenia, and waited for Henry.

"There'll be a big turnout at the election today," Brisbane said. "And it's going to be an anti-rent vote."

"This can be the beginning of a new day," Parthenia said. She told Henry that he needn't hurry home that evening to milk the cows. She would take care of them.

Henry was very grateful. Election day was a holiday for the men. After casting the vote there would be drinking, telling stories, and singing songs in the taverns, and Henry wanted to be around for that. Henry knew that he was putting a great deal on the shoulders of his sister, and he was grateful to her.

It was long after dark when Henry and Bob returned from Andes. They were both singing Parthenia's song:

We'll vote for our hills and our valleys,
Our rivulets, our rocks and our trees;
We'll vote for those candidates only,
Who'll set our prisoners free.

The wagon drew up at the front door and Henry crawled unsteadily out. "It was a great day," he said. "The anti-rent candidates won. And we sang your song all over the place."

"Yes," Bob said, "a great victory for our cause."

In that election the anti-renters put into office fourteen of their representatives out of a total of 128 members of the State legislature. The call for a constitutional convention was passed. One week before the scheduled hangings Governor Wright commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment. He was influenced principally by petitions describing O'Connor as "far from mediocrity . . . of irreproachable character--loved and esteemed by all who had the honor of being acquainted with him."

Parthenia read in the up rent Delaware Exoress that when they got the news O'Connor and Van Steenbergh "leaped about like madmen." Two hours later they were on a boat on their way to Sing Sing, guarded by forty soldiers.

Parthenia read a letter in the Voice of the Anti Renter, which well described feelings: "Truth as she always does and is ever destined to, triumphed over oppression, monopoly and the combined hosts of her enemies, and indeed those who sought to palsy those whose aim was to restore to all equal rights are indeed crestfallen."

IV

The winter of 1845-46 was a bitter one on Dingle Hill and in the entire Delaware County region. There was no time for the usual square dances which normally took place in the homes of the area. Wives and daughters now had to take on new and heavy duties and the men who were not in jail or in hiding had a lot to do. Sarah, Henry and Parthenia tried to carry on as Moses had asked them to do, and Parthenia had to take on extra jobs outside the house. When visitors came Sarah sat by the fireside and wept for the fate that had befallen her. She was oppressed by debt, and the fear that the whole of the proceeds of the farm would have to go to hiring labor. If people stayed long enough Sarah talked about Parthenia.

Parthenia had hoped that Fall to begin as a school teacher in Shavertown, where she had been hired. But the Shavertown school, like the other rural schools of the area, was closed down. Parthenia was assured that when it opened again, she would surely have her job. School teaching was the only outlet for a person like Parthenia, who had hopes for a career.

When March came Parthenia experienced her bitterest feelings of deprivation. That was always the most joyous time of the year for her. She loved the coming together of neighbors, the tapping of trees and the gathering of sap. They had a shed back in the woods, where the sap was boiled, and the sugar made. Parthenia worked on a poem that expressed how she felt about the time to tap:

March winds are melting the snow;
Upland fields steam in the sun.
Everywhere rivulets run,
It's time to tap on Dingle Hill.

Now that winter is in flight,
Who will tap on Dingle Hill,
Who draw the sap and fill the pail,
Boil the syrup through the night?

Sap yokes hang upon the wall,
Spiles and buckets gather dust,
No one here to lend a hand,
No one to tap in Dingle Hill.

On the thawing mountain slope
Waiting women watch and hope
For the prisoners to return,
And tap the trees on Dingle Hill.

As usual Parthenia sent the poem to the Voice of the anti-renter and was gratified to see it in print in a few weeks.

The summer of 1846 was Parthenia's longest summer ever. Relationships between her and Sarah continued to deteriorate, and she was happy to be out of the house as much as possible. Fortunately she was relieved of her house responsibilities and could work in the barn and fields with Henry. A neighbor, Mrs. Glendenning, came and helped Sarah in the house.

Parthenia hungered for someone to talk to about the things that mattered to her. She could not talk to Henry about

anything but crops, cows and weather. Bob Brisbane, brother of Will, came around occasionally, and she began to talk to him. Bob, unlike his brother, had little respect for a woman, but when he came to the Earle farm and found her swinging a scythe along with the men, pitching hay onto the wagon, or carrying a newborn calf in from the back field, he gained a respect for her and began to discuss politics and other matters with her.

Bob knew the trustees of the Shavertown school and through him she learned that the school was planning to open in the Fall. She sent word that she was still interested, and one day Bob came and said, "They want you to start next Monday. I'll take you over on Saturday, so you'll be ready to go to work on Monday."

On the way to Shavertown they talked about many things, starting with the impending election. Silas Wright was running for reelection as Governor, and the Whigs had put up John Young against him. "He's a good man," Bob said, "And I'm sure he'll free the prisoners."

"Have you heard from the prisoners lately?" Parthenia asked.

"We get lots of mail from Will," Bob said. "He's a born letter writer."

"Not like Moses," Parthenia said.

"Moses was hardest hit by this thing," Bob said. "Will writes that he does his job of building walls at the prison, and talks to no one."

"Poor man," Parthenia said. "He has suffered more than anyone."

"Old Silas Wright went up to see the men in prison," Bob said. "That shows how eager he is to have their good will. The anti-rent vote is crucial to his reelection. He told em they weren't like other prisoners. Called em political prisoners. I supposed he did that to make em feel good. He said innocent people often suffer most in civil commotions. He wants em to think he's their best friend. That he'll eventually pardon em. But they don't trust him farther than you can throw an ox. They think Johnny Young is their man."

"It will be a great day when the people have their own party," Parthenia remarked. "Having to go hat in hand to candidates of the old parties is disgusting and degrading."

"Yes," Bob agreed. "Especially when both parties have betrayed us in the past. But we've got to treat with the old parties to get our men out of jail."

When they neared Shavertown, Bob made an important announcement. "Warren Scudder is hiding near Shavertown," he said. "He's been there all during these months of turmoil. Anti-renters have combined to supply him with food. You'll be boarding with Claude Shaver, who was in hiding with him at first. Claude came out, he wasn't as important as Warren so it was safe for him to come out. But Warren is still in hiding."

"You surely can trust me with that secret," Parthenia exclaimed. "No one could ever pry it loose from me."

"You'll be staying with the Claude Shaver's," Bob said. "When you're there they'll take you to visit Warren."

It was the custom in those days for the school teachers to "board round" with the school families. Parthenia learned that the child of Claude Shaver in school was named Viney, and that she would know that Parthenia was in on the important secret.

Two days were burned into Parthenia's consciousness that first year of teaching. The first was the day she began teaching, without any special training for the job. The second was the day the Shavers took her to see Warren Scudder.

Parthenia had long dreamed of the time when she would be a teacher. She at an early age knew the few options there were for a poor farm girl in Delaware County in the 1840's. The main option, which most girls chose, was early marriage. She saw the girls about her, uneasy until they found themselves a "steady" and then soon after getting married, and having children. Those who didn't make marriage became "old maids," a term of contempt, for the unattached females, who found themselves a niche in some family. Neither of these options pleased Parthenia. The way of marriage and children blocked off an important part of her, and being an old maid was just as unfruitful. That is why Parthenia turned to the third alternative, school teaching.

Parthenia had gone to school in Andes and for many years her teacher had been Miss Amanda Atkins, from whom she learned a great deal about handling children. She had with Miss Atkins gained the experience of teaching younger children. Miss Atkins had always said, "That Parthenia, she'll be a school teacher some day--and a good un."

The schoolhouse was a log building along the East Branch of the Delaware River, near Shavertown. There was one room in the building, with desks running around three walls of the room, facing the wall. The fourth side of the room had a stove, the teacher's desk and a long bench to which the children were called for "recitation." Parthenia came early the first morning, and was there when the first child arrived. She stood before twenty children of assorted sizes and ages, from seven to fourteen. She spoke in a clear voice and had every moment of the day carefully planned. Parthenia had been in the school over the weekend and had sorted out the spellers and grammars, had looked at the books in the meager library. Now she had every moment planned. In the afternoon, before dismissal time, she read to them one of the stories in the library, the story of Sinbad the Sailor, and reading with dramatic effect she completely won over any child who might have still be skeptical.

The children in the school, she learned that day, were either Shavers or Barnhardts. People of those names monopolized the valley. Little Viney Shaver introduced herself that first day. She said nothing about Warren Scudder, but there was a look which she transmitted to Parthenia which indicated a wisdom beyond her years.

Little Viney Shaver was a thin, frail wisp of a girl, undernourished and a typical example of the poverty of the patroon's tenants. She was the eldest child in the family, and there were three younger and a fourth obviously on the way.

Parthenia had hesitated to take board and room from a family so much in need, but the trustees had assured her that the Shavers would take offense if they were omitted.

Claude Shaver was a tenant of Charlotte Verplanck, and a leader of the anti-rent association in the Shavertown area. He had been on Dingle Hill on the day of Steele's death, and he had escaped and gone to a cave on nearby Bech Hill with Warren Scudder. The two had lived there for a while, and then, when the situation began to relax, Claude came home, leaving Warren alone in the cave.

Once a week Claude took food up to Warren, who felt that it was not yet safe for him to go home to his family. Neighbors contributed food.

Mrs. Shaver was at the door of her bare little house when Viney and Parthenia came home from school. She was a little, mousey woman, very pregnant and very harassed by the growing responsibilities of her family of little children. "We have heard all about you," Mrs. Shaver said. "Viney talks about you constantly. She thinks you are about the best in the world."

"That thought is mutual," Parthenia said. "I think Viney is my most helpful and useful student."

"She's a poet, too," Viney said to her mother, as though she had not told her that many times before. To Parthenia she said, "My dad's a singer, and he liked your election song."

For Parthenia all this was like drinking a potent liquor. She had never known anyone who was a reader of her poems, and she felt very proud.

"Take her out into the shed and introduce her to your father," Mrs. Shaver said.

"Pa's out there making shingles," Viney said. "That's what he does mostly in the wintertime."

She led Parthenia out the back door to the little shed with a fireplace at one end. A warm fire glowed in the fireplace and before it a big black-bearded man was bent over a shaving horse. On that horse he was shaving a shingle smooth. Nearby was the froe with which he had split the shingle. When he saw the two come in, he stopped his work.

"Hi there," he called out. "I believe I remember you from that day on Dingle Hill."

"I was there all right," Parthenia said.

"Bob Brisbane told you about Warren," Claude said. "We keep him in food. Course he does some hunting of rabbits nearby. By the looks of things it won't be long now before he'll be able to go home too."

"We're going to take you up to see Warren Scudder when we bring him food," Viney said. "We do that every Sunday afternoon."

"She's a real down-renter," her father said. "Let me tell you what happened with an up-rent neighbor of ours. He one day asked Viney to turn the grindstone for him. Viney simply remarked that the stone would not turn for a Tory. Upon which he asked her how she would like to see her father hanging by the neck."

On Sunday afternoon Viney, Parthenia and Claude went up Beech Hill with a bucket of provisions. Claude tucked his fiddle under his arm. "I'm a fiddler, and something of a singer," he explained. "And Warren always liked to hear me, when I was up there. So every week I bring my fiddle along."

The road went up the mountain from the Delaware River, near the schoolhouse. Halfway up the hill they turned off and went through the fields to a haybarn. When they reached the barn Viney insisted on running on ahead. The snow was covered by a heavy crust, and Viney could run on top of the crust but the adults broke through. They lost sight of her and then they heard the lusty voice of Warren Scudder booming in the distance, "Come on ahead. All's well."

There were several parts to the hideout. The first part was a lookout from which they could view the entire approach. The roof was an overhanging rock. The front was open, and the lookout was backed by the rock of the mountain. The two sides were built with stones, which the men had laid. Behind the lookout, about twenty feet, was a stable where Warren kept a horse, just in case of emergency. Then about a hundred yards away was a cave. In this cave Warren spent most of his time.

The cave was a spacious room with a fireplace at one end. Near it stood a table, and a series of shelves on which Warren kept his provisions. On the other side of the fire was a bed. The central part of the room was an open space. Warren invited his guests to the fireplace, in front of which was a big log, which was used as a seat.

Parthenia and Warren had a happy meeting. This was the first time they had met since the day that Warren gave the Indians the order to "split and squander."

"I'm waiting patiently for the day when it will be safe for me to go back to my family," Warren said. "There's a reward out for the person that captures me, so I've got to be careful. I know some of my up-rent neighbors who would love to have that reward money in their pockets. But the time is not far off when anti-renters will all be heroes, instead of wanted criminals. I think the time is not far off. What I hear indicates to me that the days of the patroons are numbered."

"They sure are," Claude said. "And Governor Young freed the prisoners, I think it'll be safe for you to come back, Warren."

Warren had been like a father to Parthenia. "I'm so glad you're a teacher now," he said. "I often thought of you, and how it would be good if you could make something of your life beyond being a hired girl."

"She's the best teacher," Viney said. "We all love her."

"After that day on Dingle Hill it was pretty tough," Parthenia said. "I didn't think I'd last it through. People said it was all a big mistake."

Warren said: "Partheny, I hope you told the people off. This wasn't no turkey shoot nor a spelling bee. This was the real thing. Like at Valley Forge and the rest. We had to have the Indians, as much as our fathers needed them at the time of

the Stamp Act. This anti-rent movement would have died away long ago if it hadn't been for the Indians. But they did their job, and it's up to the politicians now."

"I wasn't prepared for what happened," Parthenia said. "It was like a nightmare. When Judge Parker said it was Moses who set off the chain of events that led to the death of Steele, I thought: 'Who am I, sitting here in safety while Moses rots in jail?' I felt that maybe I should give myself up."

"We each had our part to play," Warren said. "We were all between the hammer and the anvil, and we came out tough and hard. I too had my times, when I thought I oughtn't be out here a free man, while they are in jail. Then I said to myself, what nonsense, they ought to be out here with me."

Before long Warren asked Claude for some music. "It's just like when we two were here together," Claude said. "You'd say, Claude, how about a fiddle tune. Then we'd go on all afternoon."

Claude fiddled some square dance tunes first, Soldier's Joy and the Devil's Dream. Warren kept tune on the table. Then Claude put aside his fiddle and sang a few woodsmen's songs, The Shantyman's Life and Cutting Down the Pine. After that he sang a song from the old country, The Darby Ram. Claude was a raftsman in the springtime when they took rafts down the Delaware to Easton and Philadelphia. He told a few stories about the tricks the raftsmen played on the tavern keepers along the way. Finally he sang a few anti-rent songs, and ended with Parthenia's election song.

"That's a new one," Warren said when Claude finished. "I never heard that one before. Where did you get it?" Claude pointed to Parthenia. And Viney said: "Parthenia didn't just write that song. She wrote a lot of poems too."

That afternoon Parthenia felt the aptness of the comparison of Warren Scudder to Rob Roy. In the setting of that cave, with the roaring fire, the ballads and songs, and the two bearded men, she felt that Warren was indeed the Rob Roy of the anti-rent wars. The afternoon passed so rapidly, and she was very surprised when Warren pulled out his watch to say that they would have to go down the mountain in darkness.

They fumbled down the mountain in darkness. By the time they reached the Shaver home, Parthenia had begun work on her next poem, about Warren Scudder. By the time she finished her time at the Scudders she had the poem ready, and gave it to Claude to give to Warren. She sent a copy to the editor of the Voice of the Anti-renter. It follows:

Warren Scudder's Song

I walk the hills at night along a lonesome way,
Pursued by angry hunters who stalk their human prey;
My clothes are torn by brambles, but I must walk it still,
While freedom's fled the valley my home is on the hill.

I walk the hills by night, no roof may shelter me,
The yellow leaves my mattress, my pillow a fallen tree;
Good neighbors leave me food, and light their window sill
To cheer a fugitive who's hunted on the hill.

I'll walk the hills tonight to a place where I can stay,
A cave on yonder mountain where hunters lose their way;
The sky will be my window, a rock will be the door,
When freedom's in the valley, I'll walk the hills no more.

All that winter of 1846-47 there was much speculation among the anti-rent people as to when Governor Young would free the prisoners. At first confidence was high, and everyone felt that the men would be freed soon. But as the winter passed, people began to wonder whether this was not another false hope, another time when one of the old parties ran out on its obligation. Finally, on the first of February, the prisoners were called to the office to receive their pardons. "I blush to write the word," wrote Brisbane, "as a pardon I would have trampled it beneath my feet, for a pardon implies previous guilt: but as an act of justice I respected it."

The prisoners were turned out from the Clinton jail "without hat, cap or handkerchief, and without mittens" in the dead of winter. All the way through Vermont they were warmly and kindly received. Dr. Boughton was with them as far as Troy. There he left the party to continue to his home in Alps.

The other prisoners crossed the Hudson to Albany, where they were greeted jubilantly by farmers who came down from the Helderbergs. All the way through the Helderbergs they were greeted by crowds. In the Catskills they stopped at Prattsville, home of their old friend Col. Zadoc Pratt, who was a congressman and neighbor, and had befriended the tenants. He came to greet

them and give them a sumptuous dinner. When they were ready to leave he sent a four horse team to take them down the valley.

They stayed overnight at Roxbury. Will Brisbane was anxious to go over the mountain to Dingle Hill that night, but the townspeople insisted on his staying. They did not want to see him steal home in the night, like a thief or a robber. The next morning, when a four-horse team started for Andes, others fell in behind, all along the road. "Oh, how my heart beat," wrote Brisbane, "when I listened to the wild music of the mountain streams of Delaware."

Four miles from Andes the four-horse team was met by local people in sleighs bearing flags. Parthenia was in one of those sleighs. She had come over the mountain that morning from Shavertown with Claude and Viney. Brisbane reported that they heard the shouts both loud and long, "The prisoners, they come."

Parthenia saw Moses in the sleigh, and waved to him. His face was thin and drawn and he seemed to be passing through the homecoming experience without visible expression of emotion.

Parthenia also waved at Ed O'Connor and Jon Van Steenbergh, who left the group at Andes to go on to Bovina.

The four-horse team carrying Will Brisbane and Moses Earle proceeded out of Andes to Dingle Hill. Moses was left off at his home, and Brisbane proceeded to his home, where his wife was ill.

When Moses stepped out of the sleigh, he looked lost and bewildered. Parthenia stepped up to him and kissed him, and he responded with a meager smile.

"We're so happy to see you," Parthenia said. "Here are Claude and Viney Shaver, from the school where I teach in Shavertown."

"Hello, Mr. Earle," Claude said. But Moses did not respond. He walked slowly through the snow to his door. The three followed.

Sarah was inside, sitting by the big fireplace. She was not well enough to come out to meet him. "Moses, I'm very sick," she said. For the first time there was a light of feeling and concern on Moses' face.

"Sarah, it's been very, very hard for both of us," he said. Then he turned to Henry, who sat nearby. "I won't be able to help with the chores. I'm very tired."

There was not much more conversation, and then Moses went to his bedroom and took a nap. Parthenia and the Shavers took that occasion to leave.

In the sleigh going back over the hill to Shavertown, Parthenia said, "There were so many things I wanted to say to Moses. It was hard to say anything at all. Maybe that's the way it is, when people have been separated for long. It takes a while to slip back into old ways, and it's only gradually that they can get back to talking about the things that matter." Then later she added, "I wonder whether Moses will ever get back to the old ways."

Parthenia was very aware of the changing seasons and of the coming of Spring. The children at recess time went out into

the woods, and brought back pussy willows. The maples began to give out a reddish glow. The pond suddenly became alive with peepers. Across from the schoolhouse one day a farmer came and drove his ox team and plow across the field. Parthenia delighted at seeing him, and when the children left for the day she sat down on the step of the schoolhouse and drank in the smell of turned earth. Then she saw a man coming down the Beech Hill road with a familiar swinging gait. She immediately knew it was Warren Scudder, the Rob Roy of the anti-rent movement. He carried a little bundle on his back, and she knew he was going home.

"I'm on my way to my family," he said joyfully.

"Do you think it's safe," she said anxiously.

"There may be some trouble," he said. "But I think we can take it now and overcome it. There's still much to be done, and I must be at my work. Patroonery is still far from dead."

"That's true," Parthenia said. "And the people will need their leader."