

# The Mount Airy News

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## A ROMANCE OF THE MOUNTAIN REGIONS OF NORTH CAROLINA

### Story of Mary Shank and the Marriage of Her Daughter to the Man She, Herself, Had Loved

By E. Rose Batterham in Charlotte Observer.

On one of the sunny slopes of a low spur of craggy mountain in western North Carolina there is a tiny log cabin surrounded by a small garden patch where the sole inmate of the cabin, a woman, raises her scant supply of potatoes and corn. She is so old and bent and worn out with sorrow that she hardly seems like other humans. The people of the settlement in the valley below whisper strange tales about her, and some of these tales are connected with a large frame house that bears the old woman's curse, so the mountaineers say. Though this house is the best in the village, yet no one has lived in it since its first owner left, twenty years ago, taking with him his young bride. People say that the house is haunted by the old woman's curses, and that if she ever dies her ghost will go there to live.

When I visited in the settlement one summer, I heard all of these things and they interested me so that I was curious to learn the whole story and what connection the woman had with the former inmates of the frame house. So one morning I got up very early and climbed the slope to the cabin where the woman lived. She was out in the garden, and I spoke to her in a kindly tone, and began asking about the garden. She peered at me from under her old sun bonnet for just a minute, then went on with her work. Not a word would she say. I left her and went down the mountain trail. After seeing her and her home so closely, I was more than ever determined to find out the mystery that was whispered among the mountaineers.

After a week of tactful questioning, I found that none knew much of the truth about her. They had only surmised things from certain incidents in her life. I had almost given up hope, when in one of my mountain tramps I met up with an old man, who lived in the outskirts of the settlement and made souvenir paper knives out of rhododendron wood for a living. During my conversation with him, I casually mentioned the cabin and its owner. By the quick glance he gave me, and the way he smiled knowingly, I realized that he must know something of the mystery. I was right, but I paid him several visits before we became good enough friends for me to persuade him to tell me the tale that I was so curious about. He told it with the queer mountain accent and so many colloquial expressions that it was often hard for me to follow him. To write it as he gave it, with all his side remarks and his own opinions would almost make a book, so I will tell the story in my own words.

The old woman's name is Mary Shank. In her youth she had been what the mountaineers call "right peart lookin'." Then she had lived in that same little cabin with her father, Joe Burnett, for whom she kept house. The girl had two lovers. One was the heir of a well-off farmer; the other just a plain back woodman's son. Every one was very much surprised when she married Jim Shank, the poorer of the two, but people did not question her for they supposed that she must have loved him the most truly. Her other suitor, David Linn, was heart-broken. He was only a very young fellow, and not being able to bear staying so near the girl who had refused him, he went off to some distant town where he entered

college. Thus the neighbors thought. The whole truth of the matter was that Mary loved him and in a moment of anger had married his rival. This David knew; and though he longed to stay where he could be near her, he did not wish to add to her unhappiness or probably bring enmity between himself and her husband.

The young couple lived in the cabin with the bride's father. To them was born one child, a girl. Soon after the coming of little Minnie, Jim died leaving Mary a widow. When the child was just able to walk old man Burnett's death occurred; and the woman was alone with the little girl. Her father had not left Mary in poverty. There were large tracts of timber land for which she found ready sale and was able to save quite a sum for the education of the child. The mother was determined that her daughter should have every advantage. The people thought that this desire on her part was a natural outgrowth of mother-love. In truth, Mary had another reason.

David Linn had returned to his home as a lawyer, and his "larrin" was the wonder of the mountaineers. But unlike so many young men who come back to their homes with a college education, he entered into his old friendships and old life with all the fervor of his boyish days. All this Mary noted and heard of it. It filled her with a great anger and she determined to make her child his equal in every respect. She herself could not be. She was not able to bear the thought that he should surpass her in everything. He had conquered her in the matter of love. His affection had been overcome in his college days, but the woman's love for him was just as strong. Every time she needed advice about the sale of the timber land, she would go to the lawyer's office. It all though they charmed her, and were very painful ones. With all her strength she tried to conceal her love for him and appear indifferent. But her love and another passion, that David did not understand, could not but be seen by the lawyer. He pitied her, but all he could do for her was to help in the sale of the land or in deciding the best school for the child, Minnie.

So the young girl was sent away from home to a school. The separation of the mother and daughter was not hard. There was nothing in common between them. The child ever reminded Mary of her loveless marriage; and the mother absorbed in her hidden and passionate love for David had never sought Minnie's companionship. In the years that they were parted the mother thought more and more of the revenge she must surely show the man when her daughter returned equally well educated as he. The admiration that the village had for him would be damped by a rival. Of course Minnie was unconscious of these purposes. Besides, no knowledge of her mother's love affair had ever reached her; too few people in the village knew anything about it for the matter to arouse much comment then.

After four years of study away from home Minnie returned to take up her former life with her mother. The four years had been beautiful ones to the young girl; the contact with other people and the friendships she made with them had awakened all the joy that had never been inspired during her childhood. She dreaded the return home, but determined to make her life pleasant by having something

definite to do. The teaching of the village school appealed to Minnie as an occupation.

The mother took more interest in the girl, Minnie, than she ever had in the child. She gloried in her daughter's learning and gloated over the fact that she was received almost as a queen among the neighbors. "Now," argued Mary, "David can see what I've done, and how as I can get along without him and give my child as good an education as he ever had." She was sure that her revenge for her unreturned love was having the desired effect upon her former lover.

The position of teacher ranked almost as high as that of preacher, and was in the same plane as law practice in the mountain people's estimate. So when Minnie was appointed as school ma'am the mother rejoiced as over a victory. She thought that now her daughter would ever be a source of jealousy to David. Little did she understand the man's nature. She did not know that through his influence the position of teacher had been given to Minnie.

On the way to her school every morning Minnie passed by the frame house of David Linn. She often saw the tall, handsome man, working around the home, or sitting on his porch reading. To her he was nothing more than a lawyer, though perhaps she did have a kindred feeling for him, as he had, like herself, come in contact with the outside world. She had never met him formally, so only nodded a greeting when she passed, as is the custom in the mountains.

Encouraged by her mother, Minnie attended every social gathering that the village afforded. At one of these she met David Linn. After this she was constantly seeing him at parties and church festivals, and both were contented to be in one another's company.

Soon David Linn began to love the girl. He could not but own to himself that at first it was caused through her likeness to her mother, he had once loved. But as his affection grew he knew that it was the girl's own true self that had awakened a passion, which he had felt was ever to lie dormant. The love could bring him little joy—he who had courted the mother, could not for that mother's sake go to the lawyer's office to wed the daughter. It all happened so quickly that the woman on the mountain did not know until afterwards how things had been between David and her daughter.

One day as the girl was returning home from her school a terrible thunderstorm arose. She sought shelter from the blinding rain at David's house. She would not go into the house, so both she and the man sat far back on the porch and watched the terror of the storm. The lightning and thunder soon forced the pair to go indoors. As the woman passed over the threshold of his home, the man felt stronger than ever his love for her. It seemed so natural for her in reality to be here where he had placed her in his dreams. The mother and the love that David could not but know she still had for him were forgotten. The daughter was there, in all her youth and unselfishness. The present, with its love, blotted out the past. The man took Minnie's hand as she stood waiting for him to show her into which room to go.

"Minnie, let me make this your home," he asked.

The girl looked at him quickly, she did not understand.

"Don't you see," the man continued, "I love you, and want you for my wife," and as she did not speak, "I know I am old, old enough to be your father," he had not meant for those last words with all their significance to be spoken.

"Oh, don't. I was not thinking of years, that doesn't matter. I was so happy in what you have just told me that," and as she felt his arms draw her to him, "I couldn't speak."

"And you mean it, you will

be my wife?"

"Yes, David, yes." A few minutes afterwards as he led her into his parlor a thought of the mother came to him. He had never been able to ascertain whether or not the daughter knew of that love affair of the past, and the love that still remained with the mother. The time had come when he must know.

"Minnie, has your mother ever spoken of me to you?"

"No, not very often, only in connection with my work here, or the timber land. Why?"

"Has she never told you of—that we were once lovers?"

"Once lovers, what do you mean?" The girl was overcome.

"Child, child, has she never told you, when I have no right?"

"No, but I will never ask her. If there is anything to tell me you must do it."

The man meditated a while and then remembering how vitally the love affair had once touched him, he felt his right to tell the girl, whom he had now asked to be his wife. So he acquainted her with his own side, concealing as much as possible the mother's feelings in the whole affair. After he had finished the pained surprise that was in the girl's face died away.

"Of course, dear, I would have much rather had your love first, but all that's so long ago, and you don't care now."

"No, no, I ceased to care when I went to college."

"And after you left mother married father and—"

"Before I left it was, that caused my leaving."

"Well, and then mother must have ceased to care. Let's don't talk of it now. See it was stopped raining, I must go."

"Before you go promise me this—that you will go and tell your mother of our love now, and then—"

"I don't want to tell her yet. But if you wish it, well, I will."

"I do wish it—but, dear, if you need me come to me."

"Need you," she laughed. "Why I am always needing you!"

He walked with her to the foot of the trail leading to the cabin home and there left her. He turned thoughtfully away and walked straight to his home. He seated himself on the porch and gazed sorrowfully at the little cabin.

When Minnie reached home she found Mary sewing. After removing her hat, the girl came to her mother's side. "Mother, I have something to tell you. David Linn and I are to be married. We love each other."

"Yes, mother, we love each other."

There had been little mother-love in Mary Shank's nature, so it was not hard for her to deal a terrible blow to her child.

"Love each other, you say. We loved each other, child, years before you were born. He is mine. I have loved him, loved him. He shall never marry you. He must suffer as—"

"As what? Mother he does not love you. Oh"—and as the mother quivered. "But you are my mother. God, what am I to do!"

The mother went sobbing into the kitchen and the daughter was left alone with her struggle. Now she understood the words that David had spoken, "If you need me come to me." But why had he not told her all? As soon as this thought entered her mind, she dispelled it. Of course, it was not for him to tell of his love for her mother's. There was no sleep for the daughter, all night was one long flight of duty against love. In the morning she was still in the midst of the battle, that duty and love were waging. When it seemed as if her sorrow were too hard to be borne, she remembered how her mother must have suffered for all those long, long years. The mother and child met over the breakfast table, each saw that the other had endured a like struggle. On the daughter's face there was no relief. The mother's showed the keener suffering, but it also bore a resigned look.

The older woman spoke first. "You are young. I am old. You have life and love before you. I have nothing; I have

given you nothing. Ah, but it is the fault of a war, war, war, war, he must settle all of that with you. Go, I cannot bless you. I would but I cannot. Oh, I have borne him the greatest blessing of his life—him, who I would have to suffer as I have.

"Go, forget me. I wish you happiness. Why shouldn't I? You are my child—"

"Oh, mother," and Minnie came toward the woman and would have taken her mother in her arms, but Mary prevented her. "Go, go."

With a wild sob, part pain, but mostly of joy, Minnie left her home to answer that call, "If you need me—"

David and she were married that same morning. In the afternoon they left the settlement and have never returned there since. Nor have they been heard of during the twenty years since their departure. The frame house remains vacant, and the old woman watches it from her cabin on the mountain slope.

Such is the tale that the old mountaineer told me, as he whittled away on his souvenir rhododendron knives.

#### U. S. Offers \$500 for Sidney Allen.

Roanoke, Va., June 17th.—The United States government has offered a reward of \$500 for the arrest of Sidney Allen, which with the \$1,500 now offered by the State, brings the total reward for the capture of the Carroll county fugitive up to \$2,000.

The Baldwin-Felts agency in this city yesterday received a letter from William E. Logan, United States marshal at Greensboro, N. C., saying that he had been authorized by the attorney general in Washington to make the offer. The letter was signed by Chief Deputy J. M. Bailey.

The government wants Sidney Allen on a counterfeiting charge, on which he recently was bailed in the sum of \$5,000 pending a new trial.

The bond was forfeited June 3, when Sidney Allen failed to appear in the United States court at Greensboro. The authorities ask for pictures of the fugitive which will be published with the reward. The reward for the capture of Wesley Edwards is \$750.

The Baldwin-Felts agency have not yet received photographs of the man captured several days ago at Clay City, Ky., and thought to be Wesley Edwards. It is probable they will arrive Monday.

Last evening a party of five detectives who have been searching for the two fugitives in the mountains of Carroll County returned to Roanoke. The detectives have been at work about a week but were not successful in locating the hiding places of the two members of the Allen clan yet at large.

With the detectives were the two keen scented blood hounds, "Topsy" and "Beauty," from the State penitentiary at Richmond. The two dogs spent last night in the city jail where they had a private cell.

#### Inmates in the State Hospital at Morganton.

The report of Superintendent McCampbell shows that there were in the State Hospital at Morganton at the beginning of the quarter 575 men and 799 women, a total of 1,374. Admitted during quarter, 34 men and 36 women—for the quarter, ending May 31, 70; discharged, 29 men and 62 women—91; died, 10 men and 8 women—18. Remaining May 31, 570 men and 765 women—1,335.

The admissions are about the usual rate. The institution is taxed to the limit all the time and many worthy cases are held up for lack of room. The general health during the quarter was good with the exception of an epidemic of measles, affecting principally the female population.

There is no real need of anyone being troubled with constipation. Chamberlain's Tablets will cause an agreeable movement of the bowels without any unpleasant effect. Give them a trial. For sale by All Dealers

#### Jury in the Hawkins Case Clears All of the Defendants.

Asheville, June 12.—After deliberating all night, the jury in the noted Myrtle Hawkins case at Hendersonville returned to the court room this morning and announced a verdict of not guilty in the case of each of the seven defendants. Judge Foushee ordered the jury discharged and the prisoners set free.

There was a scene of wild demonstration in the court room when the verdict was announced.

The case went to the jury last night, and when court convened this morning it seemed as if all of Hendersonville were present waiting for the verdict. When the verdict was announced the friends of the seven defendants cheered and waved hats and handkerchiefs.

The defendants were George Bradley, Boney Bradley, Ab. McCall, Beatrice McCall, Dan McCall, Lizzie Shaft and Nora Britt.

The jury passed on each defendant separately and the sentence was dramatic as each defendant's name was called and the verdict pronounced.

The jury took the case at 8 o'clock last night and the verdict was announced at 11:30 today.

The discharge of the defendants in this case places the killing of Myrtle Hawkins among the unsolved mysteries of North Carolina.

#### All Bound for Chicago to Help Nominate T. R.

Salisbury, June 15.—The North Carolina delegation to the National Republican Convention started for Chicago this afternoon in a special Pullman car, leaving here at 2:30, going via Asheville.

A large crowd met the car at the station and the delegates from Salisbury and Spencer joined the party here. The car was bedecked and large banners extending the entire length of the car on each side tell the story of the feeling and policies of the Tar Heel delegates. Thirty leading Republicans were in the party and they were happy and enthusiastic insisting that the result of the work of the convention will be the nomination of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

On one side of the car was a banner bearing the information, "The North Carolina Roosevelt Special. The Old North State Delegation Solid for the Honest Chieftain—Teddy Roosevelt. Down with the bosses. Let the people rule." On one end of the car is a banner with the following inscription: "My hat is in the ring—T. R. The ring is in my hat—T. R. We have them licked."

The banner on the other side of the car bore this inscription: "My hat is in the ring—T. R. The ring is in my hat—T. R. We've slugged them over the ropes. The North Carolina Roosevelt Special, 116,000 Tar Heel Republicans for that Honest Chieftain—Teddy Roosevelt—and a square deal. Down with the bosses. Let the people rule." On the end was this message: "Teddy's got a dawg but he ain't no houn'."

His legs are short and he's close to the groun'. And you bet they ain't kicking Teddy's dawg aroun'."

#### Huge Steel Mill Payroll.

Pittsburg, June, 12.—The total payroll for workingmen in the Turtle Creek and Lower Monongahela Valleys for this week will be more than \$1,200,000. Pay days start tomorrow and will continue through the week until Saturday, when most of the plants pay off.

It is estimated that 50,000 men are employed at present in steel mills and factories in the two valleys. This number nearly equals that of 1907, the banner year in this district. This week's payroll is the largest since before the panic of 1907.

All the industrial plants are booking orders rapidly, and not enough laborers or skilled workmen can be found to supply the demand.