

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

Lucy Furman

Table of Contents

<u>The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch</u>	1
<u>Lucy Furman</u>	1

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

Lucy Furman

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

THE story of the falling in love of Philip Floyd at the Settlement School on Perilous Creek soon after his thirteenth birthday, and of the transforming effects of the tender passion upon his person and character, has already been related. Under the exacting requirements of little Dilsey Warrick, his earwashings, head-combings, tooth-brushings, and clothes-mendings, not to speak of his violent attacks of manners and generosity, were such as to make Miss Loring wish that each and every one of her twelve boys might quickly experience a like metamorphosis.

When the school-term closed in early May and the boys and girls went home to hoe corn for three months, Philip, who was to remain in the school to work during the summer, asked for a week's holiday, that he might go and visit Nucky Marrs. Nucky lived on Trigger Branch of Powderhorn, and Dilsey on Powderhorn itself, not four miles distant. As the group of children from that neighborhood set off from the school on their twentyodd-mile walk, Philip, with the light of bliss in his dark eyes, strode manfully along at the head of the other boys, while on the far side of the road Dilsey, accompanied by Rosabel and Narcissa, walked along with her usual dignity and propriety. Philip would not have dreamed of such a liberty as walking beside her; but he could at least hear her voice, see the golden braids that swung below her sunbonnet, and, when she turned her head far enough, catch a glimpse of the austere blue eyes that were his heaven.

That matters progressed favorably with him during the summer was evident from his letters to Miss Loring: "Dear Freind: I am well hopeing these few lines will find you the Same I payed a visit to Dilsey whilst I was over on Trigger and holp her and her famaly ho corn three days her pa says I am rite smart of a good worker gee he aught to see me Carpenter annyboddy can ho corn. Your Truly Friend Philip Floyd." "Dear Freind: this leaves me injoying health I hope it finds you the same it is loansome here at the school with Dilsey and you gone I wisht it was next school I bought her a fine brest Pin off Geordie Yonts we are working on the new hospittal I make sixty cents a day it would very near support a famaly. Yours Respectably Philip Floyd." "Dear Freiend: I now rite you these few lines to inform you I am Well and hope you are the Same I would of rote before but it keeps me Buizzey riting to Dilsey what spair time I got I bought her a Silk Hankerchef with Blossoms all imbroyded in the corner off G. Yonts theres few girls gets the money spent on them she does. Your Best Frieind Philip Floyd."

When school reopened in August, it was the general expectation that the love, or, rather, the privilege of loving, so expensively purchased by Philip, would continue his. But, alas! for the instability of the feminine heart! Within a week there was a deep line between Philip's brows and a return to some of his original brusiness of speech and manner. These were accounted for one morning when Hen Salyer, resting on his shovel from his labors of cleaning the stable, held forth to Miss Loring as follows:

"You ricollect me a-telling you last spring about 'Lige Munn a-passing on his paw's nag one day whilst Philip and Dilsey was talking on the front porch, and taking off his hat so polite to Dilse, and her a-telling Philip she liked manners? Well, Philip he turnt in and scratched him up enough manners after that to satisfy ten women; but some females hain't never suited, dag gone 'em, and when 'Lige started in a-bowing and a-scraping to Dilse the first day of this new school, what did Dilse do but bow and scrape back at him as bigotry as ever you seed. Then 'Lige he ups and brings her a fine apple next day, and five sticks of peppermint the next, and a poke of liquorice-draps the next. And if that 'ere girl didn't take and eat 'em right spang under Philip's eyes, with four or

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

five presents from him there in her desk, too! I wished I may never see the beat! And a girl of her raising, too! But th' ain't no depending on females." Here Hen shook his head and pondered awhile before resuming: "Of course 'Lige being fifteen and a head taller and a town boy, and his paw keeping store, all goes ag'in' Philip. Women they like size and style and presents, the scurvy little jades!"

"But Dilsey isn't that kind at all," said Miss Loring. "She is an unusually nice and sensible little girl."

"She were last year," admitted Hen; "but that hain't this . You got a heap to learn about women if you think you can tell one year what they liable to do the next. That 'ere Dilse is next to the prettiest girl in school this year, — th' ain't nobody can outlook her but Poppet, — and lemme tell you this: not one in a hundred of 'em is able to stand it; they git their heads turnt every time." Hen spoke from the accumulated wisdom of his ten years, as well as from special recent experience. During the previous term he had been the youngest of Poppet Beverley's admirers (they ranged all the way from twenty-nine to ten) and an observant student of her methods. Neither his knowledge of these, however, nor his three-months' absence from her had had power to lessen his loyalty, and on the evening of his return to the school he had sat at the supper-table with food untouched for at least five minutes, feasting his eyes on Poppet across the room, before exclaiming, with unquenchable gallantry, "Dag gone! I could butt stumps for that woman!"

Miss Loring hoped that Hen's acute mind had drawn mistaken conclusions in regard to Dilsey; but signs of their correctness multiplied. There was first a vivid outbreak of neckties on Philip—pink, yellow, green, heliotrope, a fresh kind each day. But, as Hen said, 'Lige, having his paw's whole store behind him, could outdo Philip in that. Then, on Sunday, Miss Loring was pained and shocked to see Philip walk into church late, in a hideous "store suit," with an ill-shaped, wrinkly coat and baggy, long trousers, in which he looked like a shriveled little old man, instead of the beautiful boy he was in the belted coat and knickerbockers he usually wore on Sundays. Miss Loring also saw Dilsey's fastidious eyes shrink from him and turn with relief to 'Lige's slender, well-fitted figure.

"Where did you get that dreadful suit?" Miss Loring inquired later

"Off of Geordie. It's a brand-new one he bought in Virginia this summer."

"What did he charge you for it?"

"Four dollars and forty-five cents."

"That suit," said Miss Loring, "was probably bought by Geordie at secondhand for not more than a dollar. And now you have let him palm it off on you, though you know him as well as I do. Oh, if you could only see yourself in it!"

Philip burst out savagely: "Yes, you and Dilsey and 'Lige and all of you think I hain't enough of a man to wear long breeches, just like Geordie said. But I'll show you. I'm more of a man than 'Lige Munn ever was or ever will be, and he'll live to feel it. And don't you think you can ever get me back into short pants no more; I'd ruther be dead."

In the matter of clothes 'Lige had indeed a cruel advantage, and not on Sundays only, for all the week he could and now did wear his Sunday suit and pointed shoes to school, while Philip raged in the regulation gingham shirt and overalls of the cottage boys. And clothes were by no means the worst. A few months before, 'Lige had visited Frankfort with his father, who was a member of the legislature, and had not only "rid on the railroad, bought store clothes, and seed the world," but during his stay had also acquired all the polish and graces of a finished society man. Where is the woman or girl who is not dazzled by these, and made blind to more serious faults than 'Lige's laziness and lack of ambition?

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

Not that Dilsey gave anybody active encouragement, her role being to tolerate and accept, never under any circumstances to give. She simply permitted herself to be the shrine before which gifts and accomplishments might be offered up, and seemed entirely willing to have two devotees. "She aims to keep 'em both," reported Hen, a few days later. "She had on two breastpins a-Monday, one of Philip's and one of 'Lige's; and at recess Philip he snatched 'Lige's off of her, and throwed it on the ground, and told her not to think ary girl of his could ever wear other boys' jewelries. And she stiffed up the grandest and chilliest ever you beheld, and told him how did he dare to claim the likes of her, and lay down the law on her! That she give him to understand she never took orders from nobody, and would be friendly with ten boys if she wanted. Now, did you ever hear such talk from a rightraised female? Gee! I don't know what the women are coming to. Then she picked up 'Lige's pin and fastened it on ag'in. I tell you that 'ere girl is a-treading dangerous paths, and if she don't look out, there'll be war in these parts, sure as you set on that bench. If I was Philip, I don't know as I'd go to the trouble, though. I'd git the old charm-doctor over on Clinch to lay a charm on 'Lige; that would fix him the easiest. Th' ain't nothing he can't charm away. When Keats had the quinsy, he took 'n' stood him up ag'in' a tree, and cut a hole in it right over his head, and plugged a lock of his hair up in it, and said when he growed up to that plug he'd be shet of the quinsy. And dag gone if he wasn't! And when Monroe Teed took Dave Antigo's girl away from him, the charm-doctor he tied two leetle bitty sticks crossways with a horsehair, and told Dave to burn 'em in a burying-ground at midnight, and scatter the ashes on Monroe, unbeknownst, and, by Heck! if Monroe didn't git throwed from his nag at election-time, and broke up so bad he couldn't go courting all winter, and by spring Dave had her married. I could tell you a dozen: all the young folks gits charms from him. But Philip says he'd ruther charm 'Lige hisself."

The following week a strange, unwonted calm descended upon the cottage. During playtime Miss Loring would find the boys skulking about in whispering groups behind stable and corn-crib, or in fence corners; and although at her approach they would pick up bats or shinnysticks, their efforts at play were evidently efforts.

Then one day at afternoon recess, when the pupils streamed from the school-house into the yard, out of a clear sky Philip sprang upon 'Lige Munn and felled him to the ground. 'Lige quickly regained his feet, and a battle began. The girls drew back and grouped themselves on the steps, Dilsey in the front row, while the boys, large and small, formed a thick ring about the fighters. They seemed well-matched, 'Lige's superior length being offset by Philip's solidity, skill, and fury. Interest was intense. Finally 'Lige wearied and wavered, and in a flash Philip had him face down on the ground, and sat upon him with a triumphant yell. During the combat a close observer might have noticed that the cottage boys had worked their way through the ring to the inner circle, of which they now formed a solid half, while the other half was composed of a number of Munns, Drakes, and Somerses, brothers and cousins of 'Lige. At the instant of the triumphant yell from Philip, a dozen of the latter charged in upon him, to be met more than half-way, however, by an impregnable wall of cottage boys: Taulbee and Absalom, dogged and fierce; Joab, quick and keen; Nucky and Killis, renowned, invincible heroes; the two Salyers, worthy sons of a fighting race; Hosea and Iry, gentle in peace, but terrible in war; Jason Wyatt, the youngest, but possibly the "fightingest," of all, Geordie Yonts alone being conspicuous by his absence. Over the humbled 'Lige the battle raged. The Munn side had the greater numbers, but the Floyd side the greater fighters. Now, indeed, the interest was breathless. When the bell rang for close of recess, not a boy or girl entered the school-house. When the teachers came forth to see what was the matter, they, too, stood rooted to the spot. The combatants met, grappled, fought tooth and nail. Blood flowed freely. Philip, Nucky, and Killis were glorious in battle; joyously they met the foe and flung aside the disabled. Little Jason Wyatt had several small victims in a pile at his side. The cottage boys were covering themselves with glory and the enemy with blood. Miss Holmes, the principal, ordered the grown-up boys to stop the fight. They did not (possibly could not) budge. The situation was becoming serious when Miss Loring saw Darcy Peel, the young deputy sheriff, come riding down the road, and called frantically to him. Lightly taking the fence with his nag, he dashed into the fray, carelessly waving a revolver. The boys scattered like chaff before him and would have vanished, but he called them to a halt and gave them a severe talk on the heinousness of disturbing "the women's" peace. At first he threatened to take them all to jail, but, later, relented, and released them on their word of honor to fight no more in the school-grounds. Then gracefully waving them into the school-house with the careless revolver, he went on his way.

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

From Hen that night, after the others were in bed, Miss Loring had fuller light on the subject of the fight. "Gee-oh! hain't this here Floyd-Munn war aiming to be a sizable one!" he exclaimed delightedly, slipping into her room, and closing the door carefully behind him. "Did you ever see the equal of the fighting us Floyds done to-day? By Ned! own brothers hain't nothing to blood-brothers!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Miss Loring.

"Well, you see Philip he aimed to whoop-out 'Lige, and knowed he could do it easy enough, only then he'd have all the Munns and Drakes and Somerses down on him in a twinkle, and maybe git kilt, 'Lige having so many kin, and him none in these parts. So he said them that broke bread and et salt together all the time ought to act the same as blood-kin, and if us cottage boys would stand by him, he knowed he could wipe out the whole Munn biling, and make Dilsey Warrick ashamed she ever bit into a Munn apple. And we told him we were his men, by grab! and then he took us out under the corn-crib, and cut his arm with his knife-p'int, and bled hisself into a bottle, and then he passed the knife and the bottle around. When it come to Geordie, he drawed back, the little runagate, and said he weren't able to stand the sight of blood. Philip said all right; we'd tie a meal-poke over his head and do it for him. So we done it, and he hollered so we very near had to choke him to death. And then Philip said we was all blood-brothers now, and corked the bottle, and before he buried it, made us all swear on it to stand by him, thick or thin, blood or water, up or down, going or coming. Then he ricollected about Geordie having gone pardners with 'Lige on keeps all last spring, and he said any turncoat, straddle-pole, or tattle-tale was to git strung up on a meat-hook. And Geordie he give him his hand over and over to stand by him and tell no tales (of course he aims to keep in with Philip long as he can sell him anything), and Philip he believed him, which is more'n I'd 'a' done, not on a stack of Bibles tall as that sycamore. And, sure enough, when Geordie heared the fight was a-coming off to-day, he took a bad belly-ache and went to the hospital; and I hope by now he's sick as a dog and all tied up in knots from that 'ere physic Miss Shippen allus gives us. And I'll bound you that misbegotten little jackanapes don't strike nary lick through this whole war; and, what's more, I'll wager he give 'Lige some inkling what was a-coming to-day, or there'd 'a' never been so many Munns and Drakes and Somerses in school at one time. We'd 'a' kilt the last one if you hadn't 'a' called Darcy in when you did. Philip says he'll remember that ag'in' you to your dying day."

For the next day or two the cottage boys went about swelling visibly in more senses than one, the lectures and punishments they received failing to cast the slightest shadow upon their radiant satisfaction. But when Philip, with the perfect confidence of the conquering male in having the females flock to his standard, laid a fine pawpaw on the table where Dilsey was washing dishes, she promptly flung it out of the window, with the scornful and enigmatical remark, "Some folkses are smarter than they're wise."

The forces set in motion could not have been stayed, however, had she capitulated then and there. The following Sunday, as the cottage boys, accompanied by Miss Loring, were on their way to church in the village, they were "laywayed" by a large Munn contingent as they rounded the post-office corner, and there, in full view of the church and congregation, another terrible battle raged until the deacons and pillars sallied forth and, with much difficulty and some damage, broke it up.

This time, too, Geordie Yonts was not present, but was loudly singing hymns in the church. He had had an engagement to help sweep out the "church-house," and had been permitted to go down an hour early. This spasm of industry appeared somewhat strange at the time, and on fuller consideration Miss Loring was half inclined to agree with Hen's conclusion: "That 'ere mischievous little devil is a-standing in with them Munns, and holp 'em plan to layway us, I'll bet my next winter's shoes. But of course nobody can't prove it on him. By Ned!" he added, "if it hadn't 'a' been church-time, and all them men gathered, we'd 'a' laid the Munns out of all remembrance! We had 'em very near finished, and there was six or seven extrys among 'em, too."

"It seemed to me just the other way—that you Floyds were getting decidedly the worst of it, and should have been most thankful for the interruption," declared Miss Loring. The best result of this fray was that Philip had his

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

hideous long trousers and wrinkly coat torn into shreds, so that he could not possibly wear them again.

The next engagement in the "war" was on a Sunday afternoon shortly afterward, when, as usual, Miss Loring and her boys went for a walk. Some distance up Perilous, on a mountain-slope about fifty yards above the creek, was a clump of chestnut-trees thickly embowered in wild grapevine. Neither chestnuts nor grapes were ripe, but they were at that stage when no living boy could pass without investigating. Miss Loring followed the boys up to the trees. On her arrival, somewhat to her surprise, Philip suggested that "all hands get up in the trees and set awhile and tell ha'nt stories." The day was warm, the rest welcome. The boys vied with one another in lifting and "boosting" her up, and in finding a good limb for her to sit on; and then Taulbee, the most gifted narrator, began in a low voice on the "ha'nts." Had she been out in the open, instead of sitting in the embowered coolness, with her back to the creek and road, she would have seen the girls of the school approaching along the road in charge of one of the teachers, and, at a respectful distance in their rear, the usual group of village boys. As it was, she understood things only after the event. The girls passed on along the road below, uninterested in chestnuts and "possum"-grapes; but the boys following them ('Lige and some of his supporters) ran up to have a look. Just as they got beneath, down from their ambush dropped the Floyds, with terrific yells and pockets full of chestnut-burs. The burs, when rubbed vigorously into face, neck, and eyes, make resistless weapons. Nothing can withstand them. In a few seconds the Munns were in full flight down the slope, past the astonished girls, pursued by burs, rocks, and execrations.

During the fight Geordie had never once left his safe retreat in the boughs beside Miss Loring; also, as the Munns approached unsuspectingly up the hill, he had accidentally (so he said) "fallen a piece," exposing beneath the cover a fat foot and leg. He was now accused of both cowardice and treachery. He protested: "I tell you, I'm a man of peace, like the Bible says. I don't follow fighting. I'd ruther love my enemies than to fight 'em any day." But it was useless, and he had his face rubbed with burs, and was mauled and pounded within an inch of his life before Miss Loring could rescue him.

Then the girls came trooping up to hear particulars and to congratulate the Floyds, — all of them except Dilsey, who remained, a scornful, solitary little figure, down in the road, and who remarked in a scathing voice when Philip and the other victors came triumphantly down, "Some boys would never eat nothing but fire, or drink nothing but blood, if they had their wishes." The next morning in school she passed a note to 'Lige over Philip's very head, and in full view of the entire room.

Then came the period of real darkness and despair to Philip. If devotion, if royal generosity, if bravery and prowess, fail to recapture straying affections, what is left to be done? Deep gloom settled upon him; he moped sullenly about, absorbed in his own cogitations; he ceased to wash his ears, or to brush his hair and teeth; permitted his clothes to fall into raggedness; his manners to drop from him like a garment, his generosity like a hot cake. As to the "war," he merely kept his forces on the defensive. But no further attack came, for 'Lige was not of heroic stuff. War was not his meat and drink. For him defeat in battle was easily swallowed up by victory in love. He walked about with a satisfied smile, paying more and more daring attentions to Dilsey.

It was at this psychological moment that, in the evenings and other leisure moments at the cottage, Geordie Yonts began to sing and pick a song that he had not hitherto attempted, and the words of which were as follows:

As I were rambling out one day,
I met up with Wild Bill Jones,
A-walking and a-talking with my doveey little gal,
And I warned him to leave her alone.
He looked me up, he looked me down,
And he smiled one scornful smile,
Said, "Lady, will you take this arm of mine,
And walk another while?"
I am the age of twenty-one,
Too old for to be controlled; I drawed my revolver from my side,

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

And destroyed that poor man's soul.

Who can estimate the power of suggestion, though possibly it may not have been needed in this case, or who could dream that in Geordie's famous locked box, among the treasures which surely beguiled the last cent from every cottage and day-school boy, at that moment lay two ancient pistols, picked up goodness knows when or where, and crying out to be advantageously disposed of? In all human probability, the "Wild Bill Jones" song, which could as readily be made to convey warning to 'Lige as incentive to Philip, did double duty to this end. Certain it is that when all was over, these were found to be the pistols that figured in the final catastrophe. It was an ill wind that blew Geordie no good. For once, however, he overreached himself, for his beloved box, with all its contents, was thereafter confiscated by "the women," and the "born trader" was further discouraged by the promise of expulsion at the next sale or deal of any description.

One day in mid-October, Aunt Lucinda Tollett rode in on her nag and invited the school women and all the children, and, before she was through with it, the entire village and neighborhood, to the "stir-off" at her home up Right Fork two evenings later. Great was the excitement in the school as the hour approached. Supper was hurried through, all hands helped with the dishes, and by half-past six everybody set forth on the three-mile walk, village and neighborhood young folks falling into line all along the way. The procession was a gay and anticipative one, "stir-offs" being important social events in the mountains.

Dilsey started out flanked by her usual guards, Narcissa and Rosabel; but, with unparalleled audacity, 'Lige Munn politely shouldered Narcissa away and walked jauntily along at Dilsey's side, under the very eyes of the heads and teachers. A shock ran through the entire company of girls. The cottage boys stopped in their tracks and looked toward Philip. He walked sternly along, however, and made no sign.

The crescent moon and pale stars brightened in the sky as the procession straggled along the wild and beautiful banks of Right Fork. Then in the distance appeared the red glow of the fire where the sorghum was being boiled down, and soon the Tollett house, with fields and orchard rising steeply behind, stood forth in the glare. Piles of cane, crushed out by the gin, lay about the yard, and in the midst of them, in the huge, shallow, ten-foot pan propped table-high over the fire, the juice itself bubbled and boiled and sent up delicious odors, and was stirred, skimmed, and assisted from compartment to compartment by Uncle Bolivar. The boiling had already proceeded for ten hours, and was about finished.

The eager crowd swarmed about the pan, with sticks of cane, which were dipped into the thickening sweetness and then rapturously sucked. People stood four or five deep, reaching over heads and shoulders. Needless to say, the cottage boys achieved places in the front row. Having won his, Philip had just dipped in his cane and conveyed it half-way to his mouth when his eyes were blasted, his sweet turned to bitter, by the sight of 'Lige and Dilsey immediately across the pan from him. Slowly passing the piece of cane to his left hand, he stood awaiting developments. There is a custom at "stiroffs" which is equivalent to a formal betrothal or the publishing of banns in other regions. When a pair of lovers use only one piece of cane to suck the sorghum from, it is well understood that nothing but the marriage-ceremony is needed to seal the compact.

As Philip looked, he saw 'Lige dip in a piece of cane, lick it delicately, to test its hotness, and then, with an elegant flourish, pass it on to Dilsey, who calmly and thoroughly sucked off the remaining sorghum. During the whole of this proceeding, 'Lige kept the corner of an eye carefully fixed on Philip.

Then blind, titanic rage swept over Philip's soul. His hand flew to his hippocket. 'Lige's instantaneously followed suit. A shot rang out, and Philip crumpled down on the ground.

There was an instant of horrified silence, then tremendous excitement broke forth. With one accord the cottage boys rushed for 'Lige, who stood, dazed, pistol in hand, repeating over and over, "I never done it, I never had time to fire," and would have cast him bodily into the flames had not the deputy sheriff, Darcy Peel, stepped forward

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

and laid a hand on his shoulder. Other young men, under Miss Shippen's direction, were lifting Philip to a pile of cane, and clearing space about him for air. Reviving in a moment, he looked angrily about and fumbled for his pocket.

"Where is that 'Lige?'" he demanded. "Gimme another try at him! My daggone trigger caught in this here ragged pocket and shot me in the leg this time, but I'll git him the next."

The offending weapon was quickly removed from his pocket, and Miss Shippen propped and bandaged the injured leg to stop the profuse bleeding, and ordered a stretcher made of bean-poles and wild grapevine. After this was made comfortable with Aunt Lucinda's soft coverlets, Philip was lifted upon it, and the bearers started with him for the school, followed by a crowd of weeping and wailing girls and wildly excited boys, from whom 'Lige and Geordie found it best to seek protection by clinging to the arm of the law in the person of Darcy Peel.

Near the head of the procession, and immediately following the stretcher and its attendants, walked a beautiful, fair-haired little mourner, beating her breast, wringing her hands, refusing consolation and hope, all her pride and reserve for once broken down.

"Oh, my poor boy!, my poor boy! I have gone and killed him that I liked better than anything on this green earth! I have broke his heart for him, and been the death of him, by my ill behavior, and showing civilities to that contemptible 'Lige Munn, that I never, never cared nary grain about no way, and that never could hold no kind of a candle to Philip! No, Rosabel, he hain't a-going to get well, neither. He's aiming to die, — I know that for certain, — he's aiming to depart from this world that hain't fitten for him to tread on, and from me that treated him so scandalous and dog-mean! Oh, he was the prettiest and most manliest boy that ever I seed the likes of, Narcissa, and now they're a-carrying him feet foremost! Oh, I'll never speak to nary 'nother boy long as I live, much less eat candy and apples off of 'em, and dip sorghum with 'em!" LATE in the night, when the school hospital had been reached, the bullet probed for and found, the wound dressed, and Philip lay weak from suffering, but once more at ease, a miserable, weary, tear-stained little Dilsey came haltingly into the small dispensary where Miss Shippen and Miss Loring still lingered.

"Miss Shippen," she began, with difficulty, "do you reckon it would hurt anything if you was to let me say just four words to Philip?"

"Can't I say them for you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Is it anything that will excite or trouble him? Because nothing must do that now on any account."

"No, ma'am," replied the little petitioner, humbly; "it is something that is liable to swage him down and pacify him a right smart."

Miss Shippen and Miss Loring exchanged amused glances. "Very well," said Miss Shippen, gravely, "come on in." She led the way in to Philip's bedside. "Here is Dilsey wanting to speak to you," she said.

Philip turned away his head with a deep groan; but Dilsey laid a compelling hand on his shoulder, leaned down over him, and spoke these words distinctly, slowly, and forcibly into his ear:

"I despise 'Lige Munn!"

Philip opened his eyes, looked at her intently, and then gave a long, long sigh, as if incredible burdens were rolling from him.

The Course of True Love: Kentucky Mountain Sketch

"Gee!" he said feebly, "I wished I'd 'a' got shot sooner!"