

the trust, which has beguiled you? We await your final decision."

Barton stepped into the doorway, and the moon gleamed whitely upon his night robe. "Men," he said, "I cast my lot some time ago. I cannot retrace."

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Quickly came the climax to concerted action. Barton, under duress, was led into a clearing surrounded by a dozen figures.

A flash was followed by a flame, and soon the sky assumed a lurid hue, as a fortune in tobacco paid tribute to the firebrand. A distant shot pierced the stillness, and with a shriek a young woman in scant attire dashed from the house.

"My God, father! what does this mean?" as she fell upon him.

"These fiends, the night riders, are burning the barn. I refused their demands. What next, I fear to tell."

The leader of the band approached at this moment and said:

"We have now a second and more painful duty to perform. We demand your co-operation or your crop will be oil-soaked and ruined. Then you home. There is no alternative."

Another moan followed the impressive declaration and the white hairs of the aged mother mingled with the inanimate heap that succumbed on the threshold. Tender hands became busy.

Minutes later two pairs of arms embraced Barton's neck and two voices pleaded with him to save

home and neighbors' friendship. With straining eyes he saw preparations going on for the repetition of fire, at his doorway, and with a despairing moan he surrendered: "I will abide."

Forty masked beings surrounded the trio in a kneeling circle, and as the moon slipped behind the clouds the chant arose:

"Oh, Father! We have been sorely tried and possibly found wanting. Forgive our sins! Our lights may not be yours, and we are but plastic clay. Protect our homes, and may Thy kingdom come!"

In the gray dawn a silent cavalcade wended its way townward—a drama of the dark tobacco district.



"Oh, George, dear, think how we'll worry about him when he grows up and goes out into the world. He will cost us many sleepless nights, I fear."

"Hah! If he can cost me any more sleepless nights than he does now he will have to go some."

Try an old paint brush to blacken the stove.