

SHOVELS OF WATER

A middle-aged man with his head heavily bandaged sat in the parlor one evening waiting for Father to come home from a meeting. The longer he sat the more he began to fret and stew, so that by the time his story was told he'd rehearsed it in his mind and it had silently passed his lips a dozen times. He explained that Doc had taken several stitches and bandaged it for him after he'd been hit in the head with a shovel.

"There's this young smart aleck has leased the orchard below mine, all you'd think none of the rest of us has ever done any fruit farming before, way he runs that place. He just finished the course at the cow college over in Logan and he's got a lot of high faluttin notions. I took my watering during the night last night and come daylight I noticed a few trees on one of the rows that the water didn't get to. After his turn started I just wedged my shovel in the main ditch by my head gate to coax a little water over to those dry spots. He came storming up there from his piece to see why he wasn't getting every last drop, and you'd a thought I was a criminal or something the way he carried on. Why the way that young whipper snapper talked bask to me was a caution and so I just spited him all the more by keeping my shovel wedged in the ditch. All the while I was telling him to simmer down, and not to get so all fired hot up over a little thing like that. Before I knew what was happening he came up and grabbed my shovel and cracked me over the head with it.

It was quite sometime before Father's voice was heard. He must have been struggling to smother a smile and keep a face registering sufficient concern for the gravity of such a matter. "Well now, it seems to me this is something for you two to work out with your bishop."

"I saw the bishop this afternoon. Being's how the young fellow's not a member of the Church the bishop says he's got no jurisdiction. He told me to talk to you and see if I hadn't ought to take him to court."

"I guess you might have good grounds to sue him for assault and battery, and if you had a real sharp lawyer you might win a case alright. On the other hand, maybe the other fellow would sue you for stealing his water. When it comes right down to it that's what you were doing, wasn't it? Pshaw, you'd be better off trying to settle out of court. Maybe he'd be willing to pay the doctor's bill if he was approached properly."

"Well, I guess I could go and see him."

"No, I think maybe you'd do well to send your daughter to talk to him."

"I don't see no need for that. It aint becoming for me to send a woman to do my business errands, least of all the girl."

"Just the same, I can't help feeling that he'd be less likely to get his dander up again and close his mind to reason if he saw a young lady coming to discuss the matter with him, than if he saw you with your head all bandaged and a chip on your shoulder."

It was the following Spring before anything more was heard about the feud. Then, one evening, there he was back again, sans bandage and with very little evidence remaining of his former encounter except for a slight scar on the side at the back of his head where the hair had not grown in again.

Father remarked that he hoped there would be no more trouble now that irrigation season was starting again, and that things had been worked out to the satisfaction of all concerned.

He was assured that not only was everything satisfactory, things just couldn't be better. The two combatants had arranged to combine their water turns and work the two orchards together. But of even greater interest to Father was the announcement that the young man had joined the Church and was now the man's son-in-law.