

of some strange news. The word was that conscript-officers were coming up after some of the men, both old and young, who were of the lawful age. The news was brought by a son of Widow Purvis, Jerd Pruett's sister, who lived within a mile of Clarksville. She had gone to town with butter and eggs to exchange for some factory thread — “spun truck” Mrs. Pruett called it — and she heard it from old man Hathaway, who was a particular friend of Jerd Pruett's.

Word reached the mountain just in time, too, for within thirty-six hours four horsemen came riding along the road and stopped at Mrs. Pruett's. And who should be leading them but Hildreth of Hall! Mrs. Pruett saw this much when she peeped through a crack in the door, and she was so taken aback that you might have knocked her down with a feather. But in an instant she was as mad as fire.

“Hello, Mrs. Pruett!” says Hildreth of Hall. “Where's Jerd?”

“And who may Jerd be?” inquired Mrs. Pruett placidly.

The young man's face fell at this, but he said with a bold voice: —