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The Lantern on the Battlefield

by Lawrence Maxwell

For almost two hours, shells whined across the battlefield. Then, suddenly, they stopped, and a cloud of smoke settled over the valley. For ten minutes, all was quiet.

The smoke lifted slightly. The Northern army saw a solid line of men dressed in the gray uniform of the South marching toward them. Rank after rank, in perfect formation, they came, almost five thousand of them, the men of Pickett's brigade.

Silently they marched. Nearly three-quarters of a mile lay between their lines and the lines of the Northern army, and there was almost no cover. Halfway they came; then the guns of the North opened fire.

A dreadful scene followed. The commanders of the North ordered every possible gun brought into action. As fast as they could be loaded, the guns were fired. Shells, ripping into the gray formations, mowed the men down. But instantly gaps were filled, and the gray tide swept on. Once more the guns roared, men fell, the gaps were filled, and the

charge continued. On and on they came. They reached the first line of the Northern army and pressed beyond it.

And then something happened. Pickett's brigade had lost too many men. Of the forty-eight hundred who started that charge, fewer than nine hundred had not been killed or wounded. The survivors turned and ran for their lines. The battle was over. And, by the way, this was the turning point in America's great Civil War, July 3, 1863, at Gettysburg.

Night settled over the battleground. All was quiet, except for the cries of the wounded. Nearly fifty-three thousand dead and injured men lay scattered about.

Then a little lantern came through the darkness, stopping now and then as if the man who carried it were looking for something. He was! That man had taught his son John that it was wrong to kill, but John ran off and joined the army anyway. Though his son disobeyed him, the father still loved him.

He gripped the lantern tightly and hurried along. By a group of wounded men, he lowered the light, peering into their faces. "John Hartman," he cried, "thy father calleth thee."

There was no answer.

The lantern moved on. "John Hartman, thy father calleth thee."

Only groans replied.

Father paused, gazing anxiously into the face of a dead man. After all, John might not be alive.

"John Hartman, thy father calleth thee."

And then—can you almost hear it? "Over here, Father; here I am."

It was only a weak little sound, from a boy who was almost gone. But fathers can hear their sons a long way off.

Feverishly Mr. Hartman rushed over. He knelt beside his son, tenderly picked him up, and carried him home to make him well again.

Jesus came into this world to seek and save the lost. He will lift us up and give us eternal life if we let Him. Let's say, "I'm over here, Jesus. Please come and help me." He will, and we may live forever in heaven with Him.

Scared of the Moon

by *Thelma Lee Olander*

Giddap, Abe! Hurry! Can't you move faster? It's the end of the world, and I've got to get home to Pa and Ma!"

Ida dug her heels into the sides of the old white horse and swatted him with a switch, but old Abe only seemed to move slower. He had been born tired, and as the years passed over his head, he had grown even more tired till his greatest speed was a slow walk.

Nine-year-old Ida Holden lived on a busy farm with her mother and father and five brothers. Pa Holden was a religious man and tried to train his family in the way they ought to go.

"The world's coming to an end!" he would tell them. "It's going to burn with fire. And when it does, it will be the end for everyone!"

One afternoon in late spring, Ma said, "Ida, go down to the pasture and call old Abe. I want you to go to town to take Aunt Sarah a pie. You can stay a little while and play

with your cousins, but be sure you're back by suppertime."

There was no place Ida would rather visit than Aunt Sarah's. There were three girls there about her age. After dodging five brothers all day or trying to keep up with their antics, it was a real treat to play dolls with the girls.

Quickly she ran to the pasture gate with a lump of brown sugar in her hand. Climbing to the top of the gate, she called the old horse, who loved to let the children ride on his back. "Abe," she said, holding out the sugar, "come up here. We're going to town."

Abe raised his sleepy head, then sniffed the air and began his slow *clop-clop-clop* to the fence. She slipped a bridle over his head and the bit into his mouth. Opening the gate, she led him to a mounting block, where she easily climbed onto his back. Ma came out of the kitchen door with the pie for Aunt Sarah and reminded Ida to be sure to be back by suppertime.

The sun was warm as Ida and old Abe went slowly down the long lane. Ida's excitement to see Aunt Sarah and her three cousins made the trip a happy one. And what fun the girls had that afternoon making dolls of corncobs and dressing them in pieces of silk from Aunt Sarah's scrap bag! They played house, making the furniture of fresh green leaves and using broken pieces of china for their dishes. The afternoon passed so quickly that they were surprised when Aunt Sarah called, "Ida, it's almost sundown. You must be going home."

Getting her sunbonnet, she mounted Abe and waved goodbye. Then she turned old Abe's head toward home. The rays of the setting sun made the shadow of the horse very long, and Ida laughed as she watched it jog along beside them. But soon the shadow faded, and she felt a tight uneasiness grip her. Before long, it would be dark, and at the rate

old Abe traveled, they would be on the road for quite a while before getting home. But the old horse knew every inch of the way, and his broad, familiar back was comforting to the girl on the lonely road.

Then Ida saw a sight that chilled her. A great, red ball of fire was skimming along the ground just where the earth and sky meet. As she watched it, the ball seemed to grow larger, coming closer.

"It's the end of the world!" she exclaimed out loud. "God said He would burn it with fire, and here's the fire! Giddap, Abe! Can't you move faster? It's the end of the world, and I've got to get home to Pa and Ma!"

Ida dug her heels in Abe's fat sides, urging him to hurry, but the old horse was enjoying the sweet spring evening, carrying the little girl he loved and saw no reason to move faster. Between her frenzied swats and pleadings, she cast fearful glances toward the ball of fire that by now was so large and so close that she imagined she could feel the heat of it. If she could just get home with Ma and Pa and her brothers, she could face anything, but to have to meet the end of the world all alone on the big road was too much.

Just as they reached the lane leading home, Ida took one more look at the ball of fire. It was now riding high above the earth and had lost its terrifying redness. It was the silvery full moon of May!

"It's only the moon! Why didn't I think of that!" Ida exclaimed to Abe. Her relief made her feel limp, and she began to laugh shakily at her foolish mistake. Relaxing on old Abe's back, she gazed up at the face of the beautiful moon and said, "Old Man Moon, you sure scared me. But I don't believe I'll tell anyone, for the boys would never stop teasing me."

Arriving at the pasture gate, she slid off Abe's back, took off his bridle, and gave him a loving pat. "This is our secret. I know you'll never tell it, and neither will I."

As Ida entered the kitchen, she looked around the lamplit room that to her had never seemed so lovely. There was Ma stirring the gravy, the boys washing up for supper, and Pa sitting in the rocking chair holding baby Adam. Each face took on new meaning; a few minutes earlier, she had felt sure she would never see them again.

Ma looked up and said, "Well, Ida, I'm glad you're home. Here, you finish making this gravy while I get the other things on the table for supper."

Some years later, Ida heard the true message of the Savior's coming and the end of the world. That took away her fear and made her want more than anything to see her Savior and live with Him. She began to anticipate rather than dread that day, assured that she would look into Jesus' face and exclaim, "Lo, this is my God. I have waited for Him, and He will save me."