

# THE CURSE OF CASTE

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are Democracy and Caste. The first leads to  
Anarchy, the second to Oligarchy.

"The middle way is best."

May the American people ever walk therein.

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BY

N. J. W. LE CATO

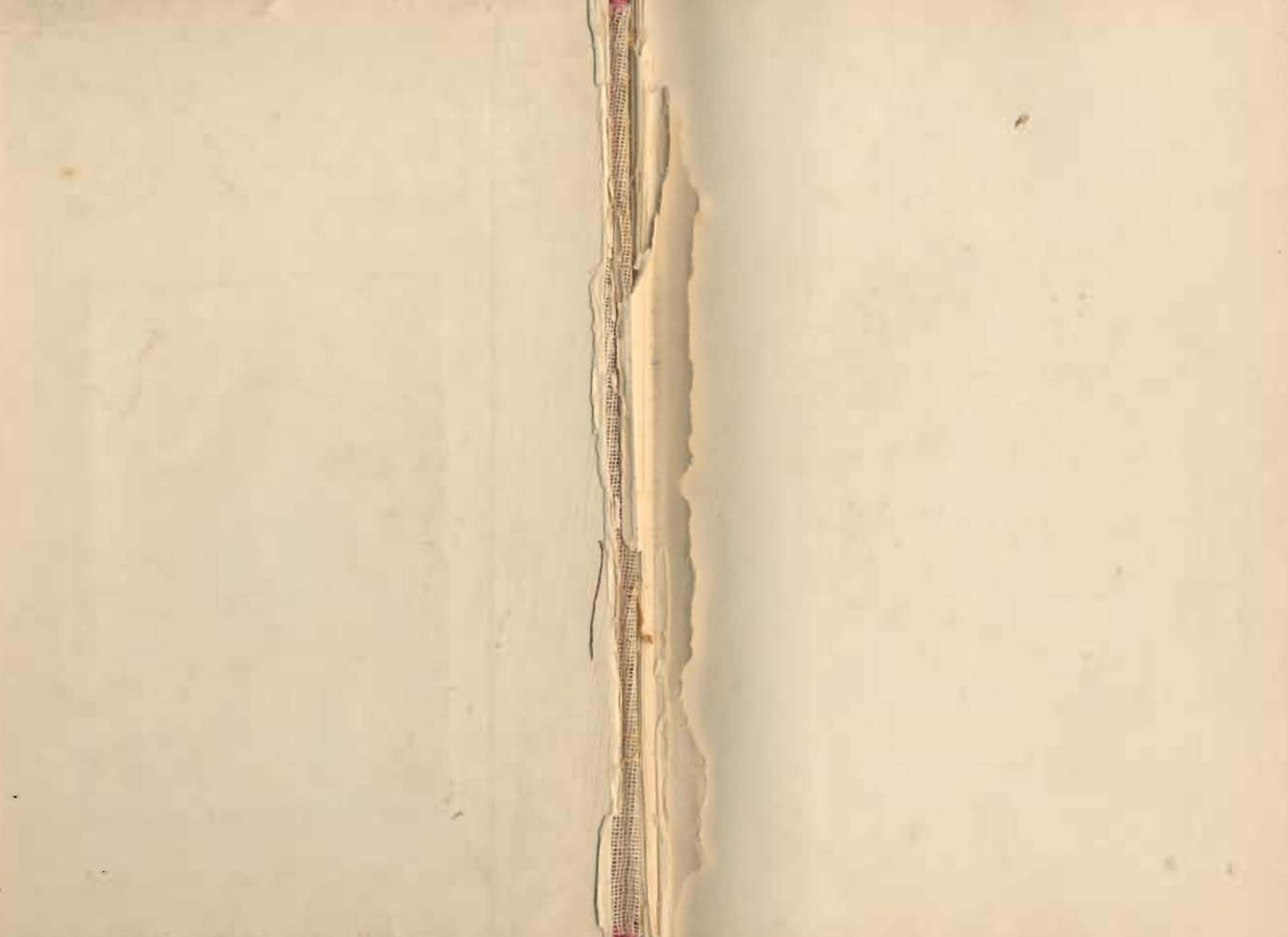
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"I allus 'low'd dat it was bad business to free the nigger  
'thout making him white."

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To the President



# The Curse of Caste

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## CHAPTER I

WHEN I first came to myself I was lying in the lap of a negro woman.

As I lay there I gazed up into eyes stained with the dark pigment of her race; into a face wearing the patient expression of gentle humility imposed upon it by long years of servitude endured by her unfortunate ancestors and features that civilization had not yet sharpened into an Arian profile; and I was not afraid.

By and by, when I began to have the ability to reason about things I found that she was not a true African, black of skin and kinky of hair, with features belonging to a true daughter of Ham, but a mulatto of brown complexion, thin lips and long black hair.

I seemed to have been born in direst poverty. No lace curtains hung inside the little windows of the humble attic where we lived—this woman and I.

There were no white walls; no tapestry; only the bare rafters and naked shingles through the crevices of which the rays of the noontide sun streamed down in vivid disks on the rough boards

of the floor, across which when I grew to be older, I used for hours to watch the transit of the summer clouds.

There was little furniture in the room. A poor apology for a cook-stove; some few pieces of cooking utensils; a small cross-legged table; a dozen or more ill-assorted and fractured articles of crockery; a chair and a stool; a low bed, not over tidy, and a washtub, with piles of soiled and starched linen lying promiscuously around, these were about the only objects with which my childhood eyes were familiar.

The woman's arms were stringy and yellow and the palms of her hands wrinkled and white; and when, long years after that, I looked upon the fingers of a drowned woman they reminded me of hers. But to me she was as precious as the fairest mother that ever held babe to her bosom, nor did it occur to me until I was able to run the streets and found that I was seriously handicapped by being accused of being born of a woman of inferior race.

This same woman had told me (for she was of a religious as well as superstitious turn of mind) that God was the maker of us all and therefore there is little wonder that I asked the question of myself, which I could not answer then, and can not answer now "Why He should make such a distinctive difference in His children and put them at enmity one against the other as though to show by positive intention the superiority of some above

others and to put a plea into the mouths of the oppressor?" Another conundrum was equally unsolvable by my obtuse brain and that was the meaning of the word "white." I was not long in discovering that it meant something of pre-eminent importance and was a legacy to him whose prerogative it was to possess and enjoy it of more value than gold and precious stones.

Whether it was a special gift of God, or an inheritance, or a purchased privilege, I could not find out. Neither could I account for the erratic distribution of the kind favor. It did not seem to depend entirely upon color for I saw many very fair people that my mother said were negroes and many very dark people, Italians and Cubans, that she told me were white. Surely this was to me a very unaccountable thing.

Our landlord was a man of dark complexion. I think he was of French, Creole, or Italian blood; and one day after he had collected his rent and gone, I said to my mother:

"Mammy, that man is a negro, isn't he?"

"No, my child, he's a white man," she replied in her gentle manner; for she was a very well-bred woman.

"But he's darker than you are, mammy?" I pleaded.

"Yes, but some dark people are white and some white people are dark, you know," she replied.

"But what is a white man, mammy?" I insisted.

"A white man's a white man, Jack, and a colored



person's a colored person," she rejoined with some show of petulance, "and that's all there is about it." And with this explanation that did not explain, perhaps on account of my weakness of intellect, I was forced to be satisfied, though still in a maze of doubt and distraction of thought about the whole matter, as I could not help observing that there was for a person born into this world a momentous difference between being called white or being called black.

But one thing was painfully clear, and that was that I was unluckily born to be classed with the latter and therefore destined to be the under dog in the battle of life and that the struggle had already begun.

I have failed to speak of my father for the only and best of reasons. I did not know that I ever had one. In fact, I did not really know that this colored woman was my mother. How and by what means I came into existence was a mystery that didn't bother me much, although I had frequent cause to rejoice that kind Heaven had favored me with at least one blessing and that was to be born fatherless; for we lived in the most degraded ward of the city, where the roughest sort of people resided, and the yells of my playfellows and the sharp sound of the lash and the duller thud of a heavier bludgeon as they received their "correction" gave me no very exalted opinion of the male parent either as husband or father and on this subject this woman I called "mammy," for reasons I sup-

pose best known to herself, never enlightened me. And thus I grew from childhood into boyhood under conditions as lowly, perhaps, as can be found or imagined in a northern city—the beautiful City of Elms—but in its lowest portion, in a rear, one-story house and in the attic thereof.

But notwithstanding my homely surroundings, life was sweet; the great round world beautiful, that is, what I could see of it from the little windows of my home and occasionally from the hills outside of the town where with other boys of my own age I sometimes went to play; for if I was a negro I had the same human instincts as other boys, loved to indulge in boyish sports and pastimes; had a penchant for marbles, tops and kites, and ragged and bare-footed as I most always was never felt my inferiority to the best of my playmates, unless taunted with my station in life and called a "nigger."

I often wondered what pleasure it gave my tormentors to jeer at me for what I could not help, or if it ever occurred to them as it did to me how silly it was to brag of what they were by accident of birth and to which they had not of themselves contributed one jot or tittle, not even good manners.

But for some cause I never could satisfactorily reason out, I was a great favorite with my playmates. I believe that humility begets more love than *hauteur*, and that pity is older than cruelty. This, or that other trait in human nature—that he who panders to the vanity of another is sure of

the good graces of the one he panders to—may explain it, but, be this as it may, I was the cause of much jealousy among my fellows and consequently a bone of contention, one day having the friendship of a certain boy and the next day his enmity, but always and at all times an object of ridicule and persecution to the low-born and ill-bred, who never lost an occasion to remind me of my poverty or to punish me severely if I resented their insults. On such occasions I was not infrequently badly beaten, but it sometimes happened that a brave and manly fellow able to dictate terms to my oppressors would step in and demand fair play if I was not overmatched, or protect me by routing my enemies if I was.

The first great trial of my life began when, in my sixth year, my mother started me to a primary school, and where although I appeared with face as clean and skin as white as any of my class I was hailed by the epithet of "nigger," and the well-known refrain of

"Nigger, nigger, never die;  
Black face and shiny eye."

was hurled at me until I cared no more for it than the twittering of the sparrows under the eaves of my humble loft.

But notwithstanding the kicks and cuffs I got, I made progress in my studies, behaved myself as best I could under the daily provocations I had to endure, and when I brought home to my mammy

the "Good Boy" cards at the end of every week it seemed to delight her very much, for although she did not know the alphabet herself or scarcely a letter in it, she seemed to be anxious that I should receive some education, and made many sacrifices to that end. Nor was her solicitude wholly unselfish. She would say:

"That's right, Jack, learn all you can and 'bime-by' you'll be a help to your old mammy."

Indeed, as I grew larger and stronger I fancied she was becoming more and more attached to me, and seemed to feel as if, had she to give me up on any account, it would be the death of her. "For what should I do without you, Jack, in my old age?" she not unfrequently remarked.

She often talked in this manner, as if she was afraid something would happen to me, or I be stolen by kidnappers and she be left childless and destitute. Her whole existence seemed to depend upon my future development.

As time passed on and I came to be eight or nine years old and very naturally began to measure my strength and compare my intellect with other lads of my age, the first law of manhood, as well as Nature—namely, that of self-protection—commenced to assert itself; my character to develop and the egoistic battle for individual existence was on. I remember well, and ever shall, the memorable affray that opened up the conflict.

A few weeks prior to the event I am about to speak of, a well-meaning but indigent family of



Irish people moved into a tenement next door to us. At the head of their numerous progeny was a tangle-haired, swaggering bully of a boy at least two years my senior, who I felt from the day I first met him, was bound to afford me amusement, such as I did not relish.

He began by teasing, railing, and insulting me, and had progressed so far in his intention to use me for his dog that he slapped my face one day because I would not steal an apple from an old woman who kept a fruit-stand on the corner near our house. He was heavier and stronger than myself, or any of my set, and of course I had to take it. The next day while some of my pals and myself were gathering wood from the site of an old frame house in the neighborhood that had been dismantled, this fellow came along with his cap hanging on the back of his bullet-like head and whistling "The wearing of the green," with his trousers rolled up to his knees, and deliberately smashed my little cart with a stone and then with fiendish delight scattered the fragments to the four winds of heaven.

If he had struck me full in the face I do not think I would have resented it. But by destroying my little vehicle he not only put an end to a source of much pleasure, but unquestionable profit, for I kept my mammy in wood by carting it home every Saturday; besides the wagon had cost me much patient toil, I having built it myself of my own boyish ingenuity and was very proud of the job; and to see it thus wantonly destroyed was more than I could

stand, and without considering the consequences I bowed my head to a level with the waistband of his trousers and ran into him, giving him such a blow in the stomach that he doubled up very much like a calf with the colic, falling to the ground on his knees in so much pain that I was really sorry for the punishment I had dealt him.

But I soon discovered that my sympathy was wasted on the dirty beast, for as he rose he snatched up a stone and the reader would have been spared the infliction imposed upon him by reading this autobiography, if it had not been that at the very moment the fellow had drawn back to brain me he was restrained by the strong grasp of a young man, who seizing his upraised arm and shaking him vigorously, cried out in a deep voice that brought him suddenly to his senses:

"You coward! Drop that! I say, drop it!"

From what quarter my savior had approached I knew not. If he had dropped down from Heaven I could not have been more surprised. And what a peculiar looking man! His form was athletic, his movements quick and jerky, and his face a study. He was young, but wore eye-glasses, silk hat, turned down collar and diagonal clothes that fitted his fine form elegantly. His features were rough, his hands like those of a giant, and although there was an expression of honest and earnest kindness in his eyes, the bluntness of his nose and the shortness of his upper lip, which was covered by a stubby moustache, and his teeth gleaming white and bull-dog

like under it, made me tremble and my antagonist to quake with fear as he writhed under the pressure of the man's vice-like grip on his arm.

"How is this; how is this? Going to brain him, eh? You, a great beast of a boy, to take up such a weapon to smash a stripling like that!"

"That's right, Mister, the bloke is a coward. He never tackles a boy of his size," said one of the crowd of small gamins that had run up to the spot to see the fracas.

"Gee! I wish you'd lick 'em, good Mister," said another.

"Why, this little fellow can do that, if you give him a fair chance," replied the stranger, looking at me and patting me on the back. "Can't you, sonny?"

"He's too heavy for me, I think, sir," I replied, my courage failing me.

"Never think a fellow's too big, my boy. It's not strength nor weight, but courage that tells. Let me look at your face, young fellow. Ah, yes, you've got a face, and a very good one. What's your name?"

"Jack, sir," I replied.

"Jack what?"

"That's all, sir."

"But your father's name?"

"Never had any father, sir."

The stranger grinned.

"He's Aunt Sally's Jack, sir," said a boy.

"She's a nigger," interposed another one of the gang.

"A negro! You're mistaken. This boy is white," remonstrated the gentleman. "Is it true, Jack, or Jack Sally, whatever be your name, that you're a colored boy? Speak out. Don't be afraid."

But before I could answer, being somewhat slow of speech, my adversary having been released, answered for me.

"Yis, soir, he is a naigur, an' I kin lick the life outen any naigur in New Haben, or the loikes of 'im."

"There seems to be some imposition here. I'm going to see this little fellow have fair play. He can whip you in less than ten minutes, if he'll only think so," said the strange gentleman.

"Try 'em, Jack; try 'em," echoed several of the young bystanders, anxious to see a bout with the stranger as a second.

With such a backer how could I refuse? I was doubtful of the issue, it is true, but I burned to get even with my persecutor, and feeling that the time had come when I must submit to degradation and perpetual slavery or shake off the chains of bondage, I said, looking up into the queer face of the stranger:

"If you will stand by me, sir, I'll do the best I can. He's bigger'n me, but he broke my wagon."

"All that I can promise you is that you shall have a free fight," replied my new champion. "It would do you no good for me to whip him for you. That you've got to do yourself. We all have to fight our way through life."



"Clear the way, clear the way; make a ring!" shouted the boys. "Golly! Now we'll have some fun!"

"All right," chimed in the stranger as off went his coat, and staking off a quadrangular piece of ground about ten feet square and enclosing it with the ropes of several of the boys' wood carts, he exclaimed with evident glee:

"I'll second the colored boy. Mickey, choose your man!"

There were some tin cans lying about the lot, and catching up two of them he ran to a nearby pond and filling them with water returned. Retaining one himself and handing the other to the bigger boy's second, he commanded us to take off our coats.

Such a business-like performance astonished the juvenile audience, and I saw that it had a taming effect on my adversary, who somewhat slowly began to divest himself of his outer garment.

Meanwhile the stranger assisted me in a rough manner to get outside of mine, coaching me all the time, telling me I'd never be a man if I continued to be a coward, and then rolling up my shirt sleeves as far as they could be got, he rubbed my arms up and down, and turning toward the other side of the ring demanded:

"Are you ready?" and upon being answered in the affirmative, commanded in a stern voice and with a broad grin: "Let your champion go! Up, Jack, and at him!"

Daunted at first by such a display of business-like ceremony, the fellow fought shy, making by far more use of his feet and legs than his arms and hands, but he seemed to tower over me so high that I began all of a sudden to be afraid of him and only tried to keep out of his reach.

So the first round ended ingloriously for both.

"Look here, young fellow," said my trainer, wiping the perspiration from my face with his handkerchief, "if you don't do better, I swear I'll leave you here and let that fellow eat you up. Why don't you go close up to him and punch him in the nose?"

"He's too much for me," I replied, panting and snuffling.

"Too much! How do you know? You have'n't tried him yet. Hold your arms this way—so!" and showing me a bit of science he again shoved me into the ring, and as I thought quite rudely.

I must confess that with this "funny" man behind me and my burly antagonist in front I began to think there were but two ways to get out of this unpleasant scrimmage, either to fight it out or run. And, as the other fellow had begun already to punish me somewhat I found myself involuntarily striking out at haphazard, when a slight scratch inflicted by my finger-nails on the Irish boy's nose angered him and he made at me like an enraged tiger, rushing me to the ground.

"Time," shouted the stranger, holding his watch in his hand.

"Let him up!" and I staggered to my feet amid the cries of:

"First knock down fer de bloke!" from the bystanders, as my friend dragged me to my corner in a somewhat delapidated condition.

By this time my nose began to bleed quite freely and I was ready to give up; but my trainer wet his handkerchief in the tin can of water and talked very nicely and quietly to me, praising me for my work and giving me great encouragement, so that I was ready in time for the next round, surprised at my recuperative ability.

Confident now of an easy victory, my opponent came at me, dancing and sparring with great glee. As he danced around me I heard my friend whisper:

"Now's your time, Jack!" and catching new inspiration I plugged him under the chin with a "left-hander" that sent him sprawling to the earth, my comrades yelling: "Golly! he's got de bloke down; hurrah! hurrah for Sally's Jack!"

But he was up in a second, and we pitched into it in good fashion until we clinched and both of us rolled over in the dust in the middle of the ring.

When they pulled us apart, I realized that honors were even, and although I would have gotten out of it then and there if I dared, I was not so distrustful of myself, although my wind was growing short and my nerves more or less upset.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried my friend, as he assisted me to my corner. "I told you so, didn't I? You can lick him, Jack Sally. Don't be afraid. Finish him this time. He's losing courage. He's not gritty. He's only a great big bluff," and all the

time he was bathing my face and neck and head and rubbing me up and down as if he had a fortune bet on the contest.

When we entered the ring again, I perceived that for some reason my pugilistic rival was not in as good form as he had been. He was more cautious, but still doggedly determined to "do me," if he could. While fixing me up for this fourth round, my second had told me not to hold my head down, but to stand up boldly and look my adversary straight into the eye. That I could fight with my eyes as well as with my fists. That I need not be ashamed of being engaged in an affair of this kind, in which not only my present peace but future welfare was at stake, and that I never need be sorry for having defended myself against the attacks of such a vicious creature, and I took his advice, getting up close to the fellow and looking at him as steadily as I could, hit him, while I thus had him charmed, many hard blows in the face. He cried out with pain and struck back at me, causing the blood to flow from my nose and lips; but I stood up to him so persistently that he got weary of fair fighting and began to butt me with his head when my friend ran in and taking him by the collar, forbade him doing so again, and we went on with the fight until time was once more called and both of us had to be carried to our respective places. I knew I was done if the "bloke" wasn't, but I did not say as much. I sat there on that strange man's knee, without either will or desire to move. In-



deed, I felt that it was not me at all but somebody else.

All the time the stranger was talking to me, but I paid no attention to what he said; nor did I realize what was transpiring until I heard a great shout and beheld my defeated antagonist getting into his coat and sulking away across the lot. I shall never again realize the joy and relief that I felt then.

It was at that moment that the stranger, transported with joy, embraced me; took me up in his arms and kissing me, put a silver dollar in my bruised and scratched hand and saying:

"He'll not trouble you any more," slipped on his coat, shook my hand, bidding me "Good-by," and leaping at a bound a near-by fence, his coat-tail flying in the air as he went over, he landed on the other side of the lot, and disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. While I, sore and bleeding, assisted by two of my playfellows, but proud of heart, went limping home, having that day laid the corner-stone of a manhood without which I sincerely believe I could never have builded a character sturdy enough to withstand the many uncommon trials that fate had in store for me.

## CHAPTER II

At the age of ten, according to my mammy's calculation, when I was getting along well in my studies and able to help her about the house and to pick up a cent or two on Saturdays and other by-times, an event occurred that entirely changed the whole tenor of my life.

I had learned by this time that my mother was born a slave in the city of Richmond, Virginia, and being freed by the war had migrated to New York and afterward to New Haven when quite a young woman, and that from being a nurse for children, then doing general housework, she had taken the apartment where we lived and supported herself by laundry work, washing for Yale students, who paid her well, she being quite an artist in that line.

But now the severe New England winters had begun to make such serious inroads upon her health, she began to talk of returning to the place of her nativity.

I saw she was determined on going South, but she seemed to hesitate between making her native city or one of the most eastern counties of the State her future abode.

Conflicting ideas seemed to sway her this way and that. The difficulty in choosing the particular

location seemed to hang on her affection for the spot where she first saw the light; its old associations and the kindred and friends she might find still living there and a mysterious obligation I could not account for, she was under to settle on the Atlantic peninsula. I was led to surmise that the whole problem centered in the probability as to which place I might be of most service to her, as her failing health made it a matter of great importance that I should, when I grew up, be able to support her in declining life.

The thought was ever running through her head that she would lose me just at the time when she would need me most, and friendless and alone she would be left a pauper.

Finally, as if drifting with the tide and still wavering in her mind, she decided to go to the eastern shore, and we began to pack our scanty "things," which were to go by freight, she and I setting out the same day for the Old Dominion.

I bade adieu to the only home I had ever known with many boyish regrets.

My mother had often entertained me with stories of the days of slavery, the glamour of which still lingered in her brain.

The happy life which she had lived in her girlhood; the wealth and splendor with which she was surrounded in the home of her master; the gay society in which the family moved; the sumptuous dinners and convivial parties in all of which, to hear her talk, she was in a certain sense a partaker;

absence of care and responsibility that had fallen to her lot since those better days, having grown more regretful by comparison, these were ever fresh in her memory and dwelt upon with ever increasing fondness. But to me who knew what freedom was, although it was a freedom dominated by caste, the idea of involuntary servitude had no charm. Perhaps I could not appreciate it, or perhaps I had no special liking for hard work, but I had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and blood-hounds and overseers were not very amiable folk to encounter.

Of course, I knew all about the war between the States from the histories I had read; but to leave school, perhaps forever, and maybe have to hoe corn and hold the plough handles under a hot southern sun were painful contemplations, but indifferently palliated by the promised pleasure to be derived from the odor of baked 'possum and sweet potato gravy, the delectableness of which my mother was wont so frequently to dwell upon.

As we journeyed on through the Sound on the boat, across the great metropolitan city, and the States of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, I had interesting employment in verifying my knowledge of geography and viewing from the car window the differences in landscape and industries which, by the by, presented but little contrast; and in watching the people at the stations and those who passed in and out of the coach we occupied.

My mammy had purchased first-class transpor-



tation and we traveled in good ordinary style until we came to the Virginia line.

By this time we had grown weary with the fatigue of the long journey and were both asleep—a failing, I had been told, was characteristic of our race—when suddenly we were aroused by a brakeman requesting us to “move forward.”

As this car was almost empty of passengers, my mammy inquired if it was not going through.

“Yes,” replied the railroad man, “but you can not go any farther in this coach unless you are a nurse to the boy,” pointing to me.

“Certainly, I’m his nurse, sir,” replied my mammy in her unforgotten darkey vernacular. “Certainly, sir, he’s my own child.”

“Then you’ll have to go forward.”

“But isn’t my ticket good?” she persisted, beginning to search for it.

“Oh, yes; oh, yes! but you must go forward and get into the ‘Jim Crow’ car. That’s for colored people.”

“Jim Crow, Jim Crow,” said my mother, meditatively, “that’s what we used to sing about; and ‘Dandy Jim from Caroline.’ This didn’t used to be the law in slavery days, was it?”

“No, no; but you’re free now, you know. Hurry up! Hurry up! I can’t stand here all day,” began to shout the brakeman.

“Pick up your traps and dust along to the front. I’ll show you the way. Niggers can’t ride in this car.”

We obediently gathered our hand luggage together and followed the trainman to the car next the engine—a second-class affair, divided by a sliding bulkhead that crossed the car, reaching from the floor about half-way up to the ceiling.

“Sit right down here,” said the man, as we entered the “Jim Crow” so-called I could not tell why, unless in “honor” of the people who were compelled to ride in it. “This is the women’s end; t’other’s for the men. You may keep the boy with you.”

I noticed the air was bad in this part of the car—vitiated by fumes of tobacco which floated in over the plain boards between the compartments.

Another woman we found in our part, told my mother if she had said she was a nurse to me and stopped there, we would have been allowed to remain where we were—as nurses, attendants of ladies, or prisoners under a white guard were allowed first-class privileges; but independent and undegraded colored people traveling for pleasure or business were disqualified. To occupy first-class privileges it was necessary to degrade the colored traveler.

Of course it could not have been expected that a boy of my age and experience should be able to see the logic of all this, and that is why I did not; and so I comforted myself with the reflection that the law must be founded in wisdom and justice, since older and wiser heads than mine had planned it and put it into execution.

I must confess that the separating of the races

did not create in me any feeling of disgust or surprise, knowing as I did from actual experience that what was not prohibited by law in the North was made prohibitory in New England by custom, and I afterward learned that what was prohibitory in the South was very much modified by custom there; and so we traveled on in that way to our destination, my mammy appearing to know as little about the country or the place where she had made up her mind to stop as I did.

The transition from a miserable attic in a rear, frame building in a crowded city to a log cabin in the corner of a cornfield under the woods was not so great a change as to home comforts as it was from the noise and bustle of town life to the quiet and almost audible silence of the country. But there was in our new surroundings genuine novelty and enough variety between the old régime and the new to alter all my plans, habits and sentiments. My mammy had saved but little money and the best she could do was to rent a small cabin of a certain Colonel Custis, a man that had been a large slave-owner in antebellum days and who was still a possessor of many acres of the "sacred soil," most of which he still cultivated with hired help.

Of course, I state now what I did not know then, but learned afterwards that he had fought bravely throughout the Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox; had come back home unscathed; gone to work on his farm, employing many of his former slaves and forgetting the past, had turned his en-

tire attention to making a comfortable living and educating an only and motherless son.

That ten or twelve years prior to our advent to his premises while attending Yale College the son had indulged in an affair of honor in which it was said he had been slain, or had slain his antagonist—nobody ever seemed to know which—the Colonel himself, if he really knew, being always quite reticent on the subject. But, at any rate, the son had never returned home after the event referred to, and was thereafter mourned by all who had known him and loved him as forever defunct.

That since then our good landlord had adopted a girl on whom he had learned to dote with all a parent's affection and that she, with his housekeeper, composed his whole family.

The bargain between him and my mammy was, that I should work on his farm during the summer at twenty cents a day and board, and that she would do the laundry work of his family, taking in what other work she could get and also helping on the farm when she was able to do so, at thirty cents a day and board; and that I should attend school in the winter, provided he could procure me a seat in the white school, there being no colored school near enough for me to walk to.

The Colonel was particular as to the specifications in the contract and had his tenant make the sign of the cross at the end of the instrument. He was learned in the law, a man of large influence, and was also a justice of the peace. Everything



being satisfactorily arranged, we moved into our new home, and the most interesting and eventful period of my strange life began.

It was early in the spring when we arrived in Virginia, the public schools were closed, and I had to "turn to" with a dozen other colored men to work on the farm. I was then not very robust, but moderately apt.

I soon learned to hitch and drive horses, to plough and to use the shovel and the hoe.

Every day I left the hut where we lived at six o'clock in the morning, took breakfast at the Colonel's, went to work at seven, was called to dinner at noon, began work again at one and returned after supper to my mammy's house, bringing her the sum of one dollar and twenty cents every Saturday evening.

This was considered good pay for a green boy of my age. But toiling thus from day to day with Sunday and occasionally half a day on Saturday for rest and recreation, was trying in the extreme and I often sat down and cried over my hard fate. But my mammy, good, patient soul, would encourage me, saying she would starve if I did not work and the Colonel was kind, making my tasks as easy as possible, while Miss Julia, his foster-daughter, became much attached to me and never failed to see that I was fed from the "great-house" table three times a day, making it her business to bring out the victuals to me in the "quarters" herself.

Still, I do not see how I could have stood it, had

there not been some manner of enjoyment, some relaxation from this monotonous condition of plodding servitude. Happily for me, I found the much-needed respite.

In the opposite corner of the field from our shanty stood another as obscure and unpretentious as ours; but if anything much frailer and older than the one we lived in.

Its one sole occupant was a patriarchal negro—a negro of the antebellum days—a species of the *genus homo*, doomed soon to live in books only and as one of the anomalies of an institution that had not many redeeming features, but which may truly point to this class of its unfortunate people, as its most lovable and regretful feature. Uncle Kiah (for thus was he called), had not only been a faithful slave but a regular Nimrod in his day.

A hunter of huntsmen; a fisherman of fishermen; and an all round foe of "varmints" was he. But now the infirmities of declining life had circumscribed his sphere and "trimmed" him down to 'possum and coon hunting only. The latter animal was fast getting the better of him on account of its habit of running far and climbing high; but "de bigger de 'possum, sar, de littler de tree he takes; and de fatter he is de better he eats," embraced the theme that now engrossed his almost entire attention.

I was afraid of him at first, for he was venerable-looking and had a way about him flattering or condescending to his inferiors, but deferential and

humble to those above him. He was a true African, evincing only the changed characteristics which the environment of civilization had slowly wrought and seemed to be proud to be called a "nigger," to which epithet he had certainly added a dignity that commanded respect and evoked admiration.

He despised those of his race whose blood had been "contaminated" with a mixture of Anglo-Saxon, and hence looked upon me as a "white nigger," saying I was a sort of "morfordike, fit nudder fer de great house nor de kitchen," and that I "was wussen' er frog-stool—nudder good t' eat or fit for er flower-garden;" but after a while I worked myself into his good graces and from that time forth I had no better friend or more lovable companion, notwithstanding the disparity in our ages and the difference of our complexion.

He gave me a young dog that I named "Ruler" and when the autumn came and the leaves began to fall, we hunted together night after night, and when not hunting I spent the greater part of my spare time at his house listening to marvelous stories of negro folk-lore and parabolic precepts that charmed my hungry brain and lulled to sleep my weary limbs.

But as the habit of night walking grew upon me, I found it would have been better for me to have shunned it, as it got me the not very respectable name of "The Terror," for I had made the acquaintance of another young lad in the neighbor-

hood, the son of a cross and crabbed man whose farm adjoined that of Colonel Custis on the south—a person who could not tolerate my race and never lost an occasion to shout "a nigger" at the least provocation. But the son and I were the best of chums.

So it had very little effect upon me whether the garrulous old man was decidedly averse to his son Joe having anything to do with me and laid at my door every little peccadillo of trespass or theft committed within a radius of ten miles around or not. Indeed, he talked so badly about me and charged me with so many offenses, that I lost what little character I had when I first came down there to live, and I was looked upon as a regular Ishmael whose hand was against everybody and everybody's hand against him. This, however, reacted upon my buoyant disposition, and I began to think I was a mighty man.

So, Jack and his dog were the *betes-noirs* of the whole community.

I did not care so much about myself, for I had a friend in Colonel Custis who knew I was innocent, so far as the committing of misdemeanors was concerned; but I would not allow any one to "put upon" "Ruler," and I spoke bad words at this same Mr. Watkins—Joe's father—in my tough boy-fashion that I had learned in the city, because he hit the poor brute with his cane one day as he passed through our fodder field on the way to Colonel Custis' mansion.



For that offense he never forgave me, as the reader will see, and half of the many troubles I passed through were of his making.

I linger here to speak a word or two of that "best friend of man," of my faithful "Ruler," knowing that by-and-by I shall be immersed in graver matters and may ungenerously forget him, and I trust I shall be pardoned for so doing, for the lessons I learned from that dumb animal have ever been of infinite value.

Truth, loyalty to friends, amiability and simple, childlike faith, were all personified in him.

It might be thought, after my paying such an encomium, vain in me to say that his character was colored in a measure by mine, but it will cause no such suspicion when I say that his master was under the ban of caste, for he was more or less cowed by more aristocratic canines; but be it said to his credit he never failed me in trouble or deserted me when cornered; and knew as well as I did that Mr. Watkins was not of the best blood and family, for as between him and Colonel Custis, "Ruler's" judgment was instinctively correct, always meeting the first with a growl and welcoming the other with submissive deference and obsequious respect.

As for him, he was never happy without me. To be alone with me was his greatest satisfaction; while to honor me at all times and to please me seemed to be the aim and object of his existence. I have been told that in antebellum days it was a

fad to look with contempt upon the cut-eared, stumped-tail dog of the freedman.

That the perceptive animal partook of the habits and character of his constant companion is unquestionable; but the man of better luck and superior breeding must have been dull of sentiment and prosaic indeed who could discover no beauty in the relationship between man and brute; and I have thought it would be well to remember that howsoever currish and sneaking a "free negro's dog" appeared to us, he might still have been his master's best and only friend.

## CHAPTER III

My first summer in the South was fast declining. September was at hand; the fodder had been saved; the sweet potato crop dug and marketed; and little remained of urgent farm work, but to gather the corn and stow it away in the cribs.

My hard work for the year was nearly over. The schools would soon open and then the question of my admittance would come up for consideration.

Joe Watkins had told me his father, who was a trustee, would offer objections and from all appearances be backed by a large majority of the patrons of the "neck" school. (We lived on a small peninsula bounded West by a river that made in from the sea and ran North for several miles in the rear of the farms and tenements in that vicinity and East by the inner bay and outer beach of the Atlantic Coast. This peninsula was called a "Neck" and hence the name of the school.)

There was no colored school within ten miles of our house, unless one crossed over the river, and this was a difficult undertaking in winter.

Colonel Custis argued that as I was very light of color and the single exception, it would not hurt to have me enter the aforesaid school as a pupil, he becoming personally responsible for my good be-

havior. How the matter was decided I will relate when I come to it.

It is sufficient to say here that my coming into the community had, from the very first, stirred up a hornet's nest. There's nothing strange about that, nor did I blame anybody but myself for it. You can find the same objections to mixed schools everywhere—in the North as well as the South. You may call it prejudice or caste, or what you will, but it exists, just or unjust, and if I unfortunately fell under the ban it was my misfortune to be called "colored," although I was as white and ruddy as the best of them, though bronzed by the sun on account of the habit I had of working in the field bareheaded.

I was passionately fond of the chase, and every night except Sunday night and every holiday, either with Uncle Kiah or Joe or by myself, I followed the trail of the wily coon or cunning opossum, cutting down timber and throwing down fences.

Otherwise, I do not believe I was a very bad boy. Mr. Watkins' opinion to the contrary notwithstanding.

I admit I was mischievous, as boys commonly are, and began to be affected with those ideas of manhood that begin to lure us on to a broader realization of the blessings of freedom. My mother was getting to be weak and infirm. Not so much from old age as ill health, and her approaching helplessness, and above all her good advice had taught



me to restrain my passions as much as a boy of my years could be expected to do; but I found it utterly impossible to crush within me the ever rising ambitions that beckoned me on to higher things.

I had an idea, young as I was, that it was wrong to yield to such influences—that I was chasing a will o' the wisp, that would, as Uncle Kiah used to say, "lead me into the green briars of sorrow and trouble, an' den leave me dar. Ole Mistah Watkins sho' done hab you den."

I was not oblivious to the certainty that if I followed up my inclinations the time would come when a battle must be fought and, of course, I go down.

I was leaving Egypt, to use a simple figure; had crossed the Red Sea and was struggling through the desert, but my enemies were lying-in-wait for me, even now, and although I might reach the banks of the Jordan, I could never cross over and claim the Promised Land. And though I might possess every requirement to entitle me to a seat in school, a pew in church, or a first-class ride in a first-class car, yet I could not do it. The sentiment of Western civilization was opposed to it. The empty, high sounding declarations of the great American Charter did not embrace it.

And this was right, because it was law—the law of the grand old commonwealth and the work of astute and wise men—plain, hard-fisted, rigorous law, unaccompanied by the saving grace of equity or the merciful reservation that declares, "the extent of the law is the extreme of injustice."

So matters went on until early in the afternoon of a certain Saturday, when Colonel Custis came over to take me before the School Board. I was standing outside in front of the shanty, my ever faithful "Ruler" at my heels, my shirt ragged, my trousers rolled up to my knees, my reddish-brown hair protruding throughout the "roof" of my straw hat—in fact, looking altogether like a tramp.

"I have come for Jack," said Mr. Custis, addressing my mammy. "I desire to take him before the board, let them see him and then decide as to his admission into the Neck School; so you had better fix him up. He's not presentable in that rig."

"Thank you, sir. I'm right glad you came, Colonel, and I want you to give Jack a talkin' to. You see, sir, he's right naturally crazy over this huntin' business—he and Joe Watkins," began my mother, by way of apology for my appearance. "He tars up his clothes, leaves the field gates open; cuts down the trees, and not a day goes over my head that old Mr. Watkins ain't over here fussin' about it. I do declare my life's worried outen me on account of it."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Sally," said the Colonel in his calm sort of way. "Mr. Watkins is an irritable and quarrelsome man, I must admit, and has no patience with colored people, but he's a trustee and may give us trouble. Get Jack ready and come along with him to the schoolhouse. The board meets at three o'clock this afternoon and it's two now," said the Colonel looking at his watch as he turned to walk away.

So as soon as the Colonel was gone my mother bade me "take a wash," and then began to get me ready, putting on me a clean, coarse shirt, a pair of trousers made over from a suit the Colonel had kindly given her, extremely baggy in the seat and expansive in the legs, and with a pair of suspenders constructed out of an old saddle girth, over my shoulders and across my back I sauntered along behind her, shoeless and hatless, through the fields to the schoolhouse. The idea of meeting Mr. Watkins, face to face, by no means accelerating my footsteps.

The news of my application had got abroad in the neighborhood and the novelty—I might say the importance of it, had drawn quite a number of people to the meeting, curious to witness the result, for it was well known that Mr. Watkins had no love for me or my kind. The Colonel's small family was well represented. Miss Julia and her governess being present as well as a Mr. Hodgkiss and his family consisting of his wife, his own daughter, Miss Anna, a girl of twelve, and Miss Gorham, his step-daughter, a woman already entering the penumbra of old maidhood with premature grey hair, but a face superbly handsome in its matured lineaments and a demeanor as amiable as she was good-looking.

These people were from the North and had but recently moved into the county, settling in our vicinity, Mr. Hodgkiss having bought of Colonel Custis a settlement adjoining his main farm on the upper side of the peninsula.

It was supposed he had come down among us to show our people how to farm, for he had many new-fangled notions in his head; and ways of cultivation that astonished our less-progressive tillers of the soil.

Their appearance at the meeting was considered to be significant of sympathy for me and was resented by uncomplimentary remarks and slurring innuendoes, which I think was wholly without cause.

When we arrived, the session had opened with Farmer Watkins in the chair—a dark-faced, thin-visaged man, whose egregious egotism by far outweighed his information and whose stubbornness was proverbial. His daughter, a spoiled young Miss in her teens, sat close by him on the right, and two young men—one a relative, a Mr. Sharpe, a law student, and the other the latter's companion, a Mr. Keene, an introductory disciple of Esculapius, who were spending their vacation in the "Neck," hunting and fishing, were seated on the left.

These two youngsters had an aristocratic air about them; were dressed more stylishly than the ordinary farmer boy and from improper breeding were obtrusive and overbearing in their manners, laughing at every little oddity of the country people and assuming an importance that did not become them. Miss Arabella, Mr. Watkins' daughter, was said to be already engaged to the latter, Mr. Keene, although she was not more than fourteen, if that, and her fiancée not over two years her senior. Though spoiled, she was very pretty, being a decided



brunette of the olive cast, taking, it was whispered, these special marks of beauty from a past and not very reputable ancestry.

I suppose somebody had in an unguarded moment told her of her charms and hence her vanity. When we entered the small and rather uncouth temple of learning, Colonel Custis had the floor. He was advocating my cause. My mother and I slipped inside the door and took seats in an obscure corner in that end of the room.

I remember Colonel Custis' speech, at least that part of it which was delivered after our arrival, and remember it well even to this day. He said in substance:

"On principle, Sir, I am not in favor of mixed-race schools. The South is not ready for such an innovation. Their establishment would create discord that would lead to violence as well as the shedding of blood. Where the negro population is so nearly equal and sometimes greater than the white, it would be impracticable and inexpedient.

"But I maintain," he said, "that the same cause does not exist here, to that extent which requires the same rigid enforcement of discriminating laws as in other Southern States. We ought not to follow in the footsteps of others, blindly. We have already done that once too often. (He, I have since been informed, was a Union man before the war.)

"Here at least is an exceptional case. This boy—" turning around and seeing me—"Come this way, Jack; this boy—" as I walked up near the desk

where Mr. Watkins sat, and between him and Colonel Custis; "this boy, as you all see, is certainly not objectionable as to color. Through some freak of nature, perhaps, in her effort to produce the fittest, she has bestowed upon this fellow a complexion that would not be a bar to his preferment in any community where his antecedents were unknown."

"Allow me to interrupt you, Colonel," broke in Mr. Watkins.

"Turn up the back of your hand, sir," roared the fierce chairman of the School Board to me.

As I did so, he continued: "That's where you may find out what he is. Look there, Colonel, look there? If he's not black, I'm not white."

Concealing an obvious sneer, the Colonel replied: "People can generally find what they're looking for. Put your hand up here by the side of mine, Jack," continued the Colonel quietly. I did so.

"Now which is the darker, Mr. Chairman," he questioned, looking straight into Mr. Watkins' face. "His or mine?"

"I'm surprised, Colonel Custis, that a man of your standing should go to such lengths to break a rule of this board by championing the cause of a good-for-nothing nigger boy who, if he had his 'jest' deserts would be in jail this minute. I think we've had enough of this kind of talk."

Mr. Watkins was beginning to lose his temper. But Colonel Custis only smiled blandly and went on:

"I trust my neighbors do not see any indications of alarm in what I have said, or find any inference in

my position, of desire on my part to menace their rights, or disturb the peace.

"Neither do I imagine there is anything in the looks of this poor lad to frighten anybody.

"I am simply requesting the board to make an exception in this case. Our laws are not the mandates of the Medes and Persians—engines of cruelty and relics of barbarism—that may not be tempered with mercy.

"I, myself, will become responsible for the good conduct of this boy. He is not in any manner vicious. Indeed, if you will examine him, sir, you will find him qualified to take grade with the best of your pupils—" Here Mr. Watkins again interrupted:

"The very idea of putting that fellow in a class of girls and boys in this school, sir, is preposterous. If such be the case, my son shall never darken this door again and I'll never pay another cent of school tax unless I'm forced. It's an outrage—a perfect outrage, sir. Take him home to your own house, sir. Let him eat at your own table—that's what you must do, sir; oh! no! not in this school, sir! no, never! oh, no! You who are able to have your daughter educated at home ain't willing to do that, but you are quite willing to force him on your poor neighbors." At this there was slight applause.

Mr. Watkins spoke this diatribe standing, while his arms beat the air like those of a windmill. Then Colonel Custis, who had taken his seat as if overawed by the whirlwind of Mr. Watkins' wrath, as I

well remember, looked very dignified and serious. He was a handsome man, fifty-five or thereabouts, fair and stout, with thin, light hair and blue eyes, and a voice deep and musical.

There was some applause, as I have said, at Mr. Watkins' insinuating remarks, and this, while by no means arousing a malevolent temper, had irritated him a little, having the effect of making him appear graver and stronger.

He arose and began by saying that no one in the hall had more respect for social purity than himself; then he went on to explain his notion of it, as consisting of cleanliness of person, both soul and body, and cleanliness of associates after the same fashion rather than outward appearances that were false, and inward prejudices that were low and degrading. As for his daughter he had no fears she would ever marry beneath her station. On the other hand, she wasn't too proud to talk to Jack.

"It has been my fortune, as well as misfortune," he went on to say, "to own more negroes than all my neighbors put together—than you, Mr. Watkins, and all your friends; and knowing them better, have a better right to judge of them, as well as being thereby placed under greater obligations to them, for the services they so willingly rendered me in days gone by. Also, my ancestors have lived in this county since the earliest days of Colonial times; so, if blood and breeding are to be considered, I have, I think no reason to take a back seat, and as to the matter of taxes, I suppose you'll readily grant that



I pay my part toward the school fund, and I say here publicly, that I do it willingly, if I have no child to send here. But if I had a boy to send to this school, I would no more object to his sitting in this hall with Jack than to have Jack play with him in my yard, or even in my house or to eat a chunk of cornbread together, as I have often done in my boyhood, with my father's negroes."

"Some folks," sneeringly put in Mr. Watkins, "wouldn't mind marrying their daughter to a nigger."

This was the great finale to Mr. Watkins' argument. It is, in fact, the great crusher that his ilk revert to.

For a moment Colonel Custis' face flushed red to his temples and his eyes flashed fire, but it was all over in a minute, when he smilingly retorted:

"Well, neighbor Watkins, I suppose that's a matter of taste, after all. At all events, it's a bugbear that has never haunted me. I have always found that people who most dread contagious diseases are most obnoxious to them. And such morganic marriages have, as we all know, taken place in the world. I'm sorry my neighbors have such a poor opinion of their wives and daughters."

Just at that moment my attention was called to the noise of cushiony footsteps behind my back, with now and then the scrape of a toe-nail on the bare floor, and "Ruler," whom we had forgotten to lock up in the shanty, had come sneaking into the schoolhouse.

This was to the already disgruntled chairman of the board a fresh cause of irritation.

"Yes!" he shouted, "and there's that sheep-killin' dog o' hissen! Drive him out! Drive him out, I say!"

Ruler, recognizing his old enemy, began to growl; getting between the desk, behind which Mr. Watkins sat, and me.

Not having command of my senses, I very ungenerously put my bare foot against the dog, ordering him in a low voice to depart.

But "Ruler" only looked up into my face, pitiaibly and whined.

"Plague take the brute," scolded the Colonel, hating to be interrupted. "Can't you get him out, Jack?"

"Yes, sir, if you let me go with him," I answered, anxious to be relieved of the strain I was laboring under. Mr. Watkins was still roaring: "Drive 'im out! Kick 'em both out! Put 'em out!" And some of the women, thinking the dog was mad, began to scream with fright, and others to stand up on the seats. Then Mr. Custis remarked with much calm assurance:

"Ladies and gentlemen, be seated, please. The dog's perfectly harmless. Jack will remove him," and bidding me pass out, the excited chairman and perturbed audience got rid of both of us without further annoyance.

What transpired in the hall after that I was ignorant of. But when it was all over I heard him say to my mammy:

"Sally, there's no use trying; they *will not* receive him; so there's the end of it."

Then, the meeting broke up. Colonel Custis and Julia stood awhile talking with the Hodgkiss family, and I following Sally, we crossed the fields again, back to our humble home, my hopes blasted, my ambition crushed, and nothing before me but degradation and ignominious toil.

The Colonel had made a brave fight for me, but ignorance, prejudice and jackass stupidity had triumphed and I was more than ever degraded.

#### CHAPTER IV

AFTER supper I took my dog and went over to Uncle Kiah's. I found the old man at his evening meal.

There was a wide and deep fireplace to his house—a sort of recess formed by the bottom of the chimney which was outside of the gable and made of a pen of sticks covered within and without with clay, and being very broad at the bottom afforded ample space for hearth and jambs. A sliding crane swung from a wooden crosspiece up the chimney on which swung a small iron pot, and on the hearth stood a spider on its three legs, where several slices of fat bacon sizzled in the hot gravy.

From this the old fellow was eating with a deliberation that would have been a charming exercise for a dyspeptic.

A large dish of corn pone sat on the bench by his side and from this he cut with his sharp pocket-knife, broad, thick slices. Small bits of this bread he cut off and placed in the spider, turning them over and over until fairly soaked in the rich grease and then with the point of his blade passed them one by one from spider to mouth with a grace of action that only the waiting upon of good digestion with few external aids could affect.



He used no plate, but improvised the slices of bread upon which he placed a thin piece of bacon and sawing bits of it off—first a modicum of bacon and then of bread without sacrificing a crumb of either, while his faithful dog, "Rover," stood patiently by with longing eyes and dripping fangs for a hunk of the bread.

So thoroughly suggestive was the scene, and so stimulating the odor of the fried meat, that although I had eaten my supper scarcely an hour before, my own mouth fairly watered with desire to participate in the sumptuous feast.

"Well, Jack, how'd ye make out?" he inquired, without looking up from his repast (referring to the school affair). "Got de sack, I'll bet."

"Didn't get in," I replied.

"Sarved you proper right," he remarked. "It's jest as imposserable to be nigger an' white pusson, boff, at de same time, as ter 'tempt ter be dog and 'possum. De Colonel oughter knowed dat ef you, yo'self didn't have any better sense.

"Ole Mistah Watkins was a settin' back cross-legged, eh, fer ye? Guess you and Joe'll have ter walk Spanish round him arter dis."

I made no reply. I felt too much humiliated over my failure and was anxious to drop the whole matter.

The old fellow saw my discomfiture, and chuckling to himself, went on with his eating.

Uncle Kiah was a great philosopher in his way, and according to his crude idea of things was a very wise man.

Of the social structure of the world he had his own quaint notions. To him everything in nature was imbued with a distinct personality. With him all nature was animate.

Inanimate objects, such as trees and flowers, he vested with living souls.

The heavenly bodies he regarded as next to God, the highest manifestations of exalted sovereignty.

The moon, he admitted, was secondary to the sun, but of more importance to him for the reason that he claimed it was created especially for his race. He styled it the "nigger's sun," and no idol was ever worshipped with more devotion; her every phase carefully noted and each change significant of some phenomenon through which was communicated the Divine will. He planted his seeds on certain aspects of this satellite; projected all his enterprises likewise and deemed those who did not do the same to be wicked and irreverent.

All animate nature he classed in one family, only differing in degree, and that difference founded either on qualities of intellect or muscular powers.

Born with the instinct of humility and politeness, he gave title to every creature from the lowly worm to the haughty stallion, and from the diminutive house wren to the scornful king of the clouds, the great bald-headed eagle.

I had noticed a pretty strong animal odor when I first entered the hut, and before the old man had finished his supper, my attention was drawn to a scratching that seemed to proceed from a flour-barrel that stood in a corner of the room behind me.

Uncle Kiah observing my curiosity to know what was causing the noise essayed to enlighten me by remarking as he arose to "clean up."

"Dat ar' 'possum in dat bar'l keeps up er mighty scramblin' dis eben'n. He seems ter be werry on-restless 'bout some'en. 'Speck his 'simmons is out. Haint had time ter git 'm any ter day and dey's ruther green yit.

"He's in dar a-fatten'n, Jack, fer Christmas."

"You're very fond of 'possum, Uncle Kiah," I suggested.

"Tremengious! De fact is I'se fond ob de flavah of most all kinds of varmints, likewise ob birds; in fac', all ob'm 'cepts screech owls. I can't naturally bar screech owls."

"You refer to those little birds that come around the house in the night and cry very like an old woman at a funeral," I suggested.

"Dat's it; dat's dem!" he exclaimed. "I mostly 'spise dem."

"Why, Uncle Kiah?"

"Kase dey's unlucky. Dey's allus de sign ob death. Don't know what de screech owl come from, do ye?"

I answered negatively.

"Den I'll jest tell ye all about it. Ye see, 'way back in ole times, fore de day of Thusalem, de bird kind all libed together, bofe wild an' tame; de turkey, de goose, de chicken, de duck, de eagle, de fish-hawk an' all de odder hawks, de gran'lad (turkey buzzard), de mockin' bird—well, all de febery tribe,

as you mought say, libed in peace together. Some ob 'em was good and some ob 'em bad. Mistah Crow, fer instance, aldo he war white as driv'n snow, at dat time, was same as he is ter dis day, a nat'ral scamp.

"He was 'lowed to live 'mongst de res', howsom-ever, like thieves and sich like is 'lowed to live 'mongst honest people now er days; and Mr. Screech Owl, he was jes' as bad, an' if hadn't been that he was a good mouser, an' kep' de town clean ob rats an' mice—no cat bein' 'lowed in dar—dey would er squelched him long fore dat.

"'Twouldn't been so bad if Mistah Screech Owl had er haved himself; but he was sorter biggotty-like, and wanted to be some'n when he was not'in', an' what was wus'n all, he up and falls in lub, he does, wid one ob de bantam pullets; an' like most o' people when dey gits in lub, he makes a right far fool ob hisself over dat little hen."

"'Huh, huh, huh!" he chuckled; but he didn't know how to git a chance to speak to her, he didn't; but he knewed Mistah Crow was a berry foxy fellow, an' Mistah Crow was most allus hungry, so he goes to Mistah Crow ter git him to help'm. You know, Jack, when a bad man wants ter do a dirty job an' haint got courage ter do it hisself, he allus tries to find a bigger rascal than hisself ter do it fer him.

"Den Mistah Screech Owl, he up, he does, an' lays his case fore Mistah Crow, and Mistah Crow he listens berry 'spectably wid er face as long as er



parson's ter what Mistah Screetch Owl hab ter say, an' when Mr. Screetch Owl gits through wid his palarber, Mistah Crow, lookin' berry serius and wise, kase he was berry hungry, he ups, he does, an' he says, crossin' his legs like a jedge: 'Br'er Screetch Owl, dis is a berry 'portant case an' I sees you is berry much interested into it, an' ob course it 'quires some high burnt sacrifice on your part's well's mine. Besides, de jedgment 'pends on de stomach an' I hasn't had my breakfast, but you can do dis: when you is rattin' round de chicken house t'night, you jes' watch yo chance an' slip off wid dat young bantam rooster dat's makin' up ter de pullet, and foteh'm out here to me, dead or 'live, an' den I'll show you how to 'comply your 'sires.'

"So Mistah Screetch Owl, he thanks Mistah Crow berry kindly and bows an' scrapes hisself ter de groun', and goes off wid fowl murder in his heart ter do what Mistah Crow had tole'm.

"So, when de dung'll fowls was all sleepin' on der roost-pole dat night, Mistah Screetch Owl, he 'tends ter be rat'n around, but stid ob doin' dat he creeps up to poor Mistah Bantam an' cotes'm by the nake an' flies away wid'm ter de big oak tree whar Mistah Crow is settin' waitin' fer'm an' he says, says he: 'Here he is, Br'er Crow.' Den Mistah Crow, he steps up, he does, sorter gallus-like, an' he stretches out his claw an' he takes Mistah Bantam and skins'm from head ter foot, jest like you'd skin er cotton-tail, whilst Mistah Screetch Owl sits down, all scrutched up, a lookin' on an' sayin' nuthin'. Den

he jess lays de skin on a limb of 'de tree and he smacks his mouf and sets back an' he eats an' eats, twil de onliest thing that's lef ob dat ar bantam is his hayd an' his feet. Den he wipes his bill dis way an' dat on de limb ob de tree (imitating the crow with his knife on the bench), an' smacks his mouf agin an' says:

" 'Well, Br'er Screetch Owl, so fer, so good.'

" 'Yes,' 'plied Mistah Screetch Owl.

" 'De balance 'mains wid you, Br'er Screetch Owl,' says Mistah Crow.

" 'What balance?' 'quired Mistah Screetch Owl. Den Mistah Crow he smiles, he does an' he says: 'you jess git inter dat ar skin, soon as possibly and when dem dung hill fowls gits ready to go ter roost, you jess go in wid'm an' take er seat on de roost-pole side er Miss Bantam, an' when de mornin' stairs begin to shine, you jess flap yer wings an' crow an' Miss Bantam, she'll think it's Mistah Bantam an' ye'll have er good chance ter make lub t' her.'

" 'But, Br'er Crow, how can I flap my wings wid dis jacket on? An' I don't know how to crow?' says Mistah Screetch Owl, childish like.

" 'Odds, bodskins!' screamed Mistah Crow, 'You're a poor courtier, Br'er Screetch Owl; spose you try ter crow. Let me hear ye.'

"Then Mr. Screetch Owl he stretch up his nake, he do and try to crow; but he only make er noise like er colt when he whinners.

" 'Dat's first class, Br'er Screetch Owl,' says Mistah Crow. 'Dat'll do. Good mornin', Br'er

Screetch Owl, 'an' wid dat, Mistah Crow he gib his wings a flap an' sails away ober de trees, er cryin' 'Caw, Caw, Caw!'

"Now, Mistah Screetch Owl he had some doubts as ter his 'bility ter play dat game, but he 'gin to argufy in his mind wid de Debil 'bout de 'priety ob undertakin' de job and when er man 'gins ter argufy wid de Debil, de Debil knows his got'm sho. So, when de ebenin' come Mistah Screetch Owl, all wrapped up in de Bantam's hide goes, he does an' takes his seat right by de side ob Miss Bantam on de roost-pole.

"Fore Miss Bantam went ter sleep, howsomeber, she says to Mistah Screetch Owl: 'Whar you been all day, Mistah Bantam?' Mistah Screetch Owl, he feelin' berry guilty-like muttered some'n 'bout fallin' inter de duck-pond.

"'Ise 'fraid you's cotch de rheumatics, Mistah Bantam,' said Miss Bantam, 'but you needn't scroutch up so close to me; an' you don't smell berry good ter night, nudder;' an' she made er funny noise in her throat, and move 'erself fudder away from'm.

"All night long Mistah Screetch Owl sot dar waitin' fer de day ter break, when all ob a suddint: 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' hollered out an ole red rooster on tother side ob de chicken house. Dat call bring Mistah Screetch Owl ter his senses; an' he stretch up his nake and he paralyze de whole flock.

"'Look a here, Mistah Screetch Owl! What you doin' here a settin' by me all dis night and—Oh,

Lord! he's got on poor Mistah Bantam's skin!' 'sclained Miss Bantam.

"An' from dat all de fowls 'gan ter cackle and dey tar poor Mistah Bantam's skin offen Mistah Screetch Owl and he had ter fly away ter save hisself and he went an' hidid hisself into er hole in er a tree, 'way down in de dark woods whar he has libed ever sense, not darin' to come out 'cept in de night, an' when you hear him say:

"'Whea! whea! whea! ut, ut, ut!' dey say as how he is moanin' fer pore Mistah Bantam, an' if you cotch'm an' zamen'm you'll find de little specks of Mistah Bantam's blood dat come offen de hide when he wore it dat night on de shoulders ob his wings."

By this time Uncle Kiah had filled his corn-cob pipe and had stopped to light it, which he did by drawing some live coals out of the fire-place on the hearth and selecting one, took it up with his bare fingers and placed it carefully on the top of the tobacco, smacking his toothless mouth loudly at every draw.

Thinking he might not recur again to the story, I suggested:

"And, Mistah Crow, Uncle Kiah? What became of him?"

"Oh, I tell ye," he replied. "Dey jess didn't do nuthin' but cotch'm and painted'm black all ober—put a mark on'm, sir, jess like Gawd put on Cain an' on me, an' you, do you'se been a-tryin' ter git it off; and dey gin orders to de kingbird ter make



der black rascal move on and when dat ar kingbird gits arter'm he sartinly do move.

"So you see, young fellow, dars no use er tryin' ter be what ye aint."

I saw the point the old man had made and felt it; but forgave him for I knew at that very moment he would have shared the last crumb with me and even risked his life to save mine.

At this juncture, Joe Watkins came in with his dog—a half-blood pointer—that had a greater penchant for rabbits than he did for 'possum and a better nose for mutton than he had for coons. He had shown his propensities on several occasions and a sheep or two had fallen by the wayside, "Ruler" and myself having to bear the unjust accusation of their "taking off."

I could not defend myself either by proving an alibi on the one hand, or not guilty on the other without "giving Joe away," and I had rather bear a bad name than lose a good friend—I had so few of them. After a while we decided to go hunting and thought we would invite Uncle Kiah to go with us. It was early in the season and the dogs were in fine humor for a dash in the woods, but the old man could not be persuaded to accompany us. When pressed for a reason for refusing he replied:

"It's the thirteenth day ob de month and only er day befo de full of de moon. I nebber goes inter de woods when dat's the case."

We tried to expostulate with him mildly, ridiculing him for his superstition, but it was all in vain.

"You two young uns can go 'thout me, if ye like, but befo' you'se as old as Kiah ye'll larn better. So thar now." And saying this he began to rummage about the hut leaving us to our choice to go without him or not at all. "You'd better stay here an' roast taters dan go a huntin' on cross nights," he said, shaking his grizzly head.

But we had already decided in our minds to do the former. So we got ready to start. "Rover's" heart was broken when Uncle Kiah called him back, saying:

"Is you er fool too? Don't yer know better'n ter go huntin' on cross nights, yer black rascal?"

It was scarcely late enough in the evening for "varmints" to run and we stood awhile until the old man gathered his tools together and began to flag a chair bottom.

"What if we do go hunting on a cross night? What'll happen to us, Uncle Kiah?" asked Joe.

"Well thar now! Haint you got sense er'nough to know er witch night from any udder night? You'll see what'll happen to ye afore ye git back."

"No, Uncle Kiah. You know we're only boys. Tell us something about witches, won't you?" replied Joe, placatively.

"Sartinly, I will. Witches is dem old women what'll put a cross onto your dorg, so he'll farly run mad and stead er huntin' proper, go all ober der woods runnin' dis way an' dat, tellin' lies an' barkin' up de wrong tree.

"Den arter you goes home and goes ter bed dey'll

ride ye all night long same's if you was er hoss, dem witches will."

"But, Uncle Kiah," I asked, "is there no way to prevent their crossing your dogs and riding you?"

"Not their crossin' your dogs, sir. No, sir, no, sir," he exclaimed with energy. "An' de onliest remedy I knows on 'ginst their ridin', is ter get one ob dese hackles dat dey hackles de flax wid an' jess lash it on ter yer breast when yer goes ter bed. Dat'll fix'm."

"In my youf I've tracked many an old weasened eyed nigger wumman ter her door by de draps er blood she leff on de grown', de next mornin' arter one ob dose rides. Huh, huh! dat I hab an' ye better 'bleeve it too, honies. Ah, mon!"

We knew when our old friend began to refresh his memory by going back to old times, that the journey was a long one, and so we thanked him for his valuable information, which, to please him, we both promised to profit by and bidding him "good-night," we passed out the door and dashed into the woods little thinking how soon the old man's prophecy was to be verified.

## CHAPTER V

WE were not anxious to strike the trail of a raccoon, for we knew that these long winded varmints often led us a weary journey, well down into the swamp, and Uncle Kiah's admonition in regard to witches, although we had treated it incredulously at the time, was twitching at our consciences now and then, so we contented ourselves with skirting the thicket near the field fences in hope of capturing a 'possum or two, as they passed from the depths of the forest to the persimmon trees that grew in the clearings.

As we approached the back of Mr. Watkins' farm Joe's dog began to bark at something fiercely down the fence in advance of us a hundred yards or two.

"That's a 'possum," said Joe, "I'll bet my life on it."

"Don't be in a hurry," said I. "Wait for 'Ruler.'"

We halted, waiting for "Ruler" to join him, the latter being well broken and true to his vocation. But instead of backing up the other dog "Ruler" came trotting back to us looking up into our faces as if to say "I want none of that." I said I thought something was wrong.



But Joe began to declare that his dog had stopped lying and that he probably had a 'possum on the ground. I sent my dog back again with only the same result. He would not join Joe's dog at all.

We were not left long in doubt as to the character of the quarry. Its outcries were pitiful to hear, and we rushed to the rescue of the unfortunate victim.

As we got near the spot where the mongrel was barking we heard other footsteps approaching from the opposite direction and—horror of horrors!—the loud and angry voice of Mr. Watkins, mingled with those of Sharpe and Keene, and face to face under the rays of the rising moon, we met beside the dying creature whose life-tide was spurting on the dried leaves like pattering rain-drops.

I knew there was trouble ahead. Our identification was complete. There was no way of escape. The *corpus delicti* was beyond dispute; the well-known ear-marks; "crop and slit, the right and underbit the left," made other evidence of ownership redundant. The whole truth was this: there lay before us in the last death-throes one of Mr. Watkins' most valuable rams!

Surely, as Uncle Kiah had said, it was a cross night for me; for, although it was Joe's dog that was guilty of the crime it would be me upon whom the blame was sure to rest.

"Ah, ha!" fairly gloated Mr. Watkins. "I knew 'twas you, you villain! I've caught you this time, you black scoundrel!"

By this time the guilty mongrel had crept away, and "Ruler," standing close to me, began to lap the crimson drops as they splattered far out on the ground.

"See, see! Look for yourselves, young men! You see whose dog it is?" eagerly exclaimed Mr. Watkins.

"Father," began Joe.

"Yes, you're here too, are you? If you don't get out of this woods, you nigger-loving scamp, I'll cut one of these birch twigs and flay you alive! Go, I tell you! Just to think of it! My pet ram! To be killed in this manner!" he sighed sorrowfully.

"'Twas your dog that did it, sir," I ventured to say.

"You lie, you rascal, you lie! There is no other dog here but yours. His mouth is smeared now with the blood. Just feel, both of you," and he grabbed "Ruler" by the back of the neck to hold up his head so his witnesses might examine his lips for themselves.

But he had reckoned without his host, and got a snap on the wrist for his temerity.

"D——n the brute; he's bit me!" roared Mr. Watkins. At which Mr. Sharpe made a kick at the disgusted animal.

"Don't kick my dog," I said, surlily, and it may have been saucily, for I would not allow anybody to hurt "Ruler."

"Kick him! I'll kick you, if you say much," he replied, bristling up to me and drawing back his foot.

"You can arrest me," I said, "but you shall not abuse my dog."

"I'll kick the life out of him," retorted Sharpe, still drawing back his foot.

"Don't do it," said I, forgetting my size and stepping forward in front of the dog.

"Get out of my way, you black scoundrel," roared my adversary, clutching me by the throat and tearing my collar open, "I'll show you——"

He didn't finish the sentence. With one blow with my right fist between the eyes, I sent him reeling to the ground and at the same time "Ruler" seized Mr. Watkins by the leg of his trousers, and Mr. Keene, coming up to the relief of his friends and meeting the same reception as his chum, the two set up such a howl that I, getting scared at what I had done, gave "Ruler" the key and we two, running one after the other, made a dash for home, never stopping for branch or brier until, with my clothes torn to shreds, I reached home and without waking my mammy crept into my trundle bed, where I lay awake all night long, trembling and shaking, for I knew they would "have me up" before Colonel Custis the next morning, and I felt as if I richly deserved it.

Nor did I miscalculate. By the time my mother was out of bed an officer of the law (a constable) was at the door and I was put under arrest on two charges, to wit: One for trespassing upon the grounds of Mr. Watkins and killing his sheep, and the other assault and battery; the penalty of the

first being from one to five hundred dollars fine and six months imprisonment, one or both, at the discretion of the court; the second, thirty-five lashes on the bare back and thirty days in the county jail, one or both, at the discretion of the justice!

I was allowed to swallow a hasty breakfast, which my poor old distressed mammy prepared with tears in her eyes, and then the constable took me over to the Colonel's.

They tied my hands and feet while the officer went for the witnesses and I sat there weeping bitterly, wiping my eyes on my shirt-sleeves. Julia Custis passed through the great hall where I was. I was ashamed to look at her. My hair, long, thick and wavy, was tangled all about my neck and the grime of my hands was streaked over my face. "Ruler" had missed me and following the constable's buggy had come into the house and was lying at my feet, as conscious of my degradation as I was myself.

I would rather have died in the woods than have that girl see me in such a plight, she had always been so kind to me.

"You're a bad boy, Jack," she said. "Why did you strike Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene? You're bad and I won't stand for you any longer."

I replied, weeping: "They wanted to beat my dog, Miss."

"But your dog had killed one of Mr. Watkins' sheep."

"No, madam," I replied. "It was Joe Watkins' dog. 'Ruler' is not a sheep-killing dog."



"Can you prove that?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," I replied.

"By whom?"

"Joe Watkins, ma'am."

"I trust you may, Jack. Papa says its a serious charge and will go hard with you. I'm sorry for you. But you *will* keep getting into trouble."

I looked up at her shaking back the curls from my forehead. There was more sympathy in her clear blue eye than had been in her words. Her compassion overcame me and I began to cry aloud.

"Naughty Jack. I—I wish I could do something for you," and standing awhile gazing pityingly at me, she passed out of the room, leaving behind her a ray of sunshine that touched my heart, small but warming, just as the little speck of light used to warm the back of my baby hand on the floor of the old attic in my first home in the far away North.

Colonel Custis also passed through the hall several times, but did not speak to me. He appeared to be annoyed and wore a frown on his face, which hurt me more than the prospect of punishment.

It was Saturday and the trial was ordered to be held in the "Neck" school house.

Thither, repaired the several parties to the action, and many of the neighbors. Also, among them being the Colonel's family, daughter and governess, Mrs. Watkins and her daughter Arabella, the Hodg-kisses and other neighbors, with a few colored people, including Uncle Kiah who was heard to remark before the Court opened:

"I done tole dat sappy-headed boy it were cross-night. Tut, tut, tut. But he zarves to be made ter know better dan ter take de law in his own han's like dat. Go huntin' cross-nights, eh!" and Uncle Kiah shook his great bushy white head until his old plug hat nearly fell off.

When everything had quieted down, Colonel Custis gravely took his seat behind the teacher's desk and the constable announced the opening of the Court.

"Where is your son, Joe, Mr. Watkins?" inquired the justice, casting his eyes over the audience.

"He's not here, sir," replied Mr. Watkins with some embarrassment.

"Where is he?" demanded the court angrily.

"I had urgent business in the lower county and sent him to attend to it," was the response spoken in rather a dogged tone.

"Did you not know that it was necessary to a proper administration of justice to have him here, and that it is contempt of court in you to send him away when you knew a summons was out for him?"

"As to contempt of court, sir, he left before the summons reached my house and as to witnesses, I should think we had a sufficient number here to convict that fellow."

"A hundred witnesses cannot condemn him, sir, unless he's proven guilty and one good witness in his favor might clear him. I do not intend to sit upon an *ex parte* case and have a mind to continue this case until next week."

At this declaration of the learned judge there was much dissatisfaction on the part of my accusers and their friends. But I noticed a bright smile radiate the face of Miss Gorham, Mr. Hodgkiss' step-daughter.

"Never mind," said the Colonel, "I will hear your witnesses and if I find it essential to have your son testify, I will adjourn the case until such time as you may be able to produce him. We'll proceed. Stand up, Jack."

I was sitting by my trembling old mammy with the constable on the other side of me and as I staggered to my feet, I saw all the people gazing at me with cold and indifferent glances—all except Miss Gorham.

I could not see Julia, for she had taken a seat directly in my rear.

"You are charged here" (holding the warrant in his hand), "by Mr. Watkins for trespassing upon his property and killing with your dog one of his sheep, valued at the sum of five dollars and by these young gentlemen, Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene, with assault and battery, both offences being committed in the woods behind Mr. Watkins' field at about eight or nine o'clock last night. What say you? Are you guilty or not guilty?" solemnly spoke the magistrate.

In my embarrassment I did not know exactly what to say, but a female voice I well knew behind me whispered: "Say not guilty, Jack."

So, my tongue clapping up against the roof of

my mouth, I repeated "Not guilty," and was told to take my seat.

Then Mr. Watkins went forward, kissed the book and told his story.

It was all against me—so were the stories of the two young men.

To go into details would be superfluous. I had been an old offender. My dog had killed the ram, being caught red-handed, and I had outrageously assaulted Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene and my dog had torn Mr. Watkins' trousers as well as having inflicted a bit of a wound on the back of his wrist.

It was in evidence that Joe was present, but his dog was not. It was falsely proven that "Ruler" was a sheep-killing dog by reputation.

The justice was serious and thoughtful. I had never seen a court of any kind in session, but I felt guilty, not of having anything to do with the killing of the sheep, but of protecting my dog and defending myself; nor yet did I feel morally guilty, but guilty of a breach of the social code and of assuming prerogatives that did not belong to me. I was not able to express myself then in this manner, but I know how I felt and what I would have said if I had had the language to express it.

At last Colonel Custis straightened himself up and said:

"In view of the fact that Joe is not here to testify in this case, I have a proposition to offer, Mr. Watkins."

"Well, sir," spoke up the latter.



"I see you have valued your ram at five dollars. Will that sum reimburse you?"

"No sir. No sir. I'd rather have that boy's hide than a hundred dollars. He shall be punished, sir, to the last extent of the law," and as Mr. Watkins was saying this he sprang to his feet and fairly shouted, "I wont accept any compromise. I wont be trifled with. I'll have justice or I'll take it! This is a pretty pass—"

"Sit down, Mr. Watkins. Sit down, sir," commanded the Colonel. "The Court will attend to that matter." Then he tilted back his chair and looked up at the ceiling a minute, after which he sat down hard and square in his seat and said:

"As to the trespass the court awards five dollars to the complainant for the value of his property with the costs of this action by him expended, which I, myself, will discharge, and as to the double assault, it is ordered that the boy receive fifteen lashes on his bare back, moderately applied and be released."

The complainants and their adherents were struck dumb with indignation and disgust with the decision; while a murmur of pity arose behind me, partially overcome by the sobs of my old mammy.

"Huh, huh! It's er righteous jedgment, de Colonel has gin'm. It'll larn'm ter 'have hissself hereafter, but 'fore Gawd I'd take de thrashin' fer'm if dey'd 'low me," said Uncle Kiah audibly.

"And it is the further order of the Court that the dog in the case be taken out by the constable and shot," resumed the Colonel, rapping for order. O my God! This to me was horrible!

The faithful animal was lying as usual at my feet.

Throughout the painful ordeal of the whole trial, I think I had been moved, by feelings of humiliation and fear only. Nor was it so much the dread of punishment as a sort of stage scare, occasioned by the solemnity of the scene, the faces of acquaintances and the horror of publicity.

But when I realized that my innocent dog must die, my heart was broken. I would rather have died myself.

I had friends in that little audience, but I did not know it then. I thought that Colonel Custis felt interested in me; that Uncle Kiah's honest old heart sympathized with me, stern as he appeared to be; that Julia would have assisted me if it had been in her power and that my mammy's heart was bleeding for me. But where could I find another eye like that poor faithful dog's. So full of love and pity; so trustful and sympathetic as he looked up from the floor, smiling in my face, as ready to serve and protect me now a degraded prisoner as if I had been a king, and as innocent as an unborn babe!

I was about to stoop down and take him up in my arms when the constable tapped me on the shoulder and said: "Come with me." The people who had witnessed the trial were pouring out at the door.

I saw Mr. Keene go up to Miss Arabella Watkins and heard him say to her: "I guess we'd better go." And saw her with a look of exultation on her face, as she replied: "No, not yet, I want to stay and see the show."

I saw the Colonel go up to Mr. Watkins and give him money and heard sharp words between them; and I saw Julia Custis excitedly approach Mr. Sharpe and with cheeks aflame beseech his leniency while he stood looking at the ground and shaking his head like the coward that he was.

And I saw another person—a woman with a pale, but transcendently handsome face talking earnestly with Colonel Custis—a determination in her bearing and a firmness in her demeanor that would have made the Goddess of Justice blink behind her bandage.

There was a tree standing in the playground and to this I was led by the officer and ordered to divest myself of my outer garment—a ragged jacket of divers colors and after that my shirt to my waist. The vulgar crowd pressed up close around us—so close that the constable who had tied me to the tree, had to shove them back in order to draw his cowhide. The air was chilly that afternoon, but I did not feel it. Shame and ignominy had accomplished their perfect work and I had nerved me for the keen sting of the lash; but my dog! They had put a rope around his neck and I heard him beyond the circle of the crowd crying piteously as he struggled to get back to me.

I knew if they had not done this, at the first crack of the whip he would have been at the officer's throat—and so did they.

But now he was powerless to assist me or himself and was doomed to soon meet a worse fate—if anything could be worse—than mine.

"Stand back! Stand back!" commanded the officer taking a step or two from the tree. "Stand back, I say!" and looking over my shoulder, I saw him draw back the rawhide and, flinching, I closed my eyes. I had not observed that some one was rushing through the crowd like a wedge making a path that closed in after her like the dead-water that follows the wake of a ship through the ocean; but I heard a voice crying: "Hold, hold! Don't touch that boy! Here, here! I have a stay of execution! See, see! And again looking behind me I saw Miss Gorham with a paper in one hand and the rawhide which she had snatched from the officer in the other—her hat off and the great roll of her iron-grey hair tumbling to her shoulders.

"Pardon, lady; but you must not interfere with the execution of the law. Will you kindly let go of the whip?" demanded the constable.

"Law! Law!" shrieked the woman. "It's not law. It's brutality. It's barbarism." Then in calmer, but earnest tone:

"Understand me, Mr. Officer, I hold in my hand a stay of proceedings from his Honor. Read it and satisfy yourself."

While the constable was reading the order there was much confusion among the bystanders.

"She's a Yankee woman," said one. "An abolitionist."

"What right has she got to interfere?" asked another.

"Madam," said Sharpe, "this is no place for you



nor for sentiment. You'd better go back where you belong." She turned upon him:

"This is no woman's place, I admit, sir, but men are scarce in this country and when that's the case, the presence of women is excusable. I've procured a stay of proceedings from Justice Custis, sir, and this case will be reheard; and I'll tell you now it can and will be proven that you began the assault on this boy and I will see, sir, that you yourself are prosecuted. Take care, sir" she emphasized, "for if this disgraceful farce of justice is carried any farther, you yourself will be the central figure of a tragedy that will be played out on this very spot which you'll not relish. Arrange your clothing, Jack, and come with me."

The cock's shrill note that brought the drowsy, faithless Simon to his senses on that chilly Friday morning that ushered in the day his Master died, struck no fiercer on the conscience of the lying disciple than did the sudden report of a gun and the agonizing cry of a dog recall to my mind the fate of my "Ruler." In the excitement of the moment I had forgotten him.

I had followed at Miss Gorham's heels that kind lady into the school-house, where were Colonel Custis, Julia and her governess, the other members of the Hodgkiss family and my mammy, where I was receiving a lecture from the Colonel as to my future behavior and a gracious offer from Miss Gorham to pay us a visit on every Sunday afternoon to teach me, when the shot was fired.

I had not understood that the stay of execution that had been granted in the case of the Commonwealth against me for assault and battery did not include the judgment and execution in the trespass case; the truth was I was too young and too ignorant to know anything about law business, but one excruciating fact remained and that was I had forgotten the poor brute and left him to perish without even a thought of his fate. If the bullet had struck my own heart I could not have sprung to my feet more suddenly.

"Sit down, Jack. Sit down," ordered the Colonel. "Close the door Sally," he said to my mammy.

"Jack!" called Miss Gorham. But an army with bayonets could scarcely have detained me.

With one leap I gained the top of a desk and throwing myself against the window I tumbled to the ground, cut and bleeding from the broken panes, then gathered myself to my feet and like a maniac ran towards the woods.

I met the officer coming back, casting the empty cartridges from his revolver.

He called on me to stop; but I heeded not the call. I reached the thicket and there tied to a pine sapling lay my dog; his limbs contorted, his lips contracted and his jaws clinched with the agony of a cruel death.

I fell on my knees and took him up in my arms, trying in vain to feel one trembling flutter of life in his stiffening body.

I pulled back his eyelids, calling him by name,

fondly hoping against hope to catch one glance of recognition. But the dull stare of the filmy organ was all I got, then I threw myself upon his lifeless body and gave up in despair.

The voice of Mammy Sally calling me, aroused me from the stupor into which my grief had carried me and untying the rope from the tree I wrapped my pet up in my jacket and bearing my precious burden in my arms I followed her home across the fields.

## CHAPTER VI

BETWEEN our house and Uncle Kiah's, but nearer the latter's and at a short distance from the fence that enclosed the woods stood a majestic black walnut-tree.

It marked the spot of a negro grave-yard. Here in the bramble infested with reptiles and the haunt of rabbits slept the nameless and unhonored men of toil; the faithful sons of Africa, who for many generations had watered these very fields with the sweat of their brow, bearing with remarkable patience the subjugating yoke of slavery, going to their toil from day to day and returning "like a galley slave to his dungeon," night after night without change and without hope, only to fall down in the harvest field or the long furrow and be carted out to find rest at last under the shade of this old tree. It was here that I, assisted by old Uncle Kiah buried "Ruler."

"He's sho ter find good company here, my lad, for dars many er old time 'possum hunter lying in dese weeds and briars.

"Dar's ole Uncle Calup lyin' somewhar about here, an' Jacup, my first marster's fisherman a lyin' dar—Jacup was a 'sponsible man, he was—an' Hannah de cook ober dar, and de two little nigger chil-



him dat coteh fire an' burnt up 'bout in dat d'rection. An' dar in dat hole lies lazy Jim who use ter run away twice er year—huh, huh, huh, he was er comical niggard dat Jim—lubed chicken but wouldn't tech er fish er oyster ter save yer life. Said dey was too common.

"An' here whar you see dis cypress shingle er stickin' up is Kissiah. She was my uman fer nigh onter forty year." And the old man took off his hat and stood looking down at the slight depression over which some wild honeysuckle was creeping. "Gawd bless her," he piously ejaculated, his voice choking with emotion. "She war a little headstrong and liked ter jaw, bound ter hab de las' word, but she war a good an' true uman arter all dat." And he went on half talking to me and half soliloquizing, pushing aside the bushes here and there to find the spots he was looking for. The old man was extremely kind on that occasion and did all in his power to amuse and console me; and although I felt little like ever going into the woods again I promised him that I would take a hunt with him some time during the Fall; and from the burying I went home with him to supper.

We now began to save fodder and I worked with the hands pulling the corn blades and cutting off the tops of the stalks. It was unpleasant work in the sickening September sun and the more sickening odor of the dying weeds; and many of the hands contracted bilious fever.

But when Sunday came it brought Miss Gorham

to our lowly hut as she had promised and new books and new lessons which I read and studied by the blaze of a light-wood torch on the hearth, and as I learned more and more my thirst for knowledge increased and this pleasing my kind friend and protectress, she redoubled her attentions, coming over with her half sister, Miss Anna Hotchkiss, sometimes in the evening during the week, the two not infrequently accompanied by Miss Julia Custis and her governess—a jolly set, that since the day of the trial had, as if by a community of sentiment, banded themselves together to fight the dogmatic intolerance of their neighbors by whom they had been ostracised, though by no means made unhappy on account of it.

These visits had very much refined me and risking the criticism of being thought egotistical, I venture to say I had from that time no special vices, eschewing oaths and saying my prayers every night and morning.

But for one in my position there was great danger ahead. With the refining process came also the cravings of ambition and the throbbings of sentiment. The more I knew the more I wanted to know; and the deeper I felt the deeper I desired to feel.

I suppose all this was natural but it made me feel a sort of guiltiness for allowing myself to be impressed by such feelings. I now know that to balk nature is to dwarf the man.

I soon forgot the trial episode in my improved circumstances.

My enemies thinking that prudence was perhaps the better part of valor let the case die and we heard no more of it. But I knew they were watching me very closely, ready to pounce upon me at the first slip on my part and hence another reason for circumspection and care as to my conduct.

Thus through the instruction and influence of Miss Graham and the wholesome fear of my foes I was growing to be a very good young fellow.

But I was a negro. No one doubted that, not even myself.

And whenever that thought crossed my mind I felt like a peacock when he catches a glimpse of his ugly feet and in supreme disgust, droops his gaudy tail. I bore the name if not the color and that was sufficient to damn me.

About this time I think I was undergoing a period of transition.

I was changing from a life of primitive to one of intellectual enjoyments; and every day the question would come to me: was it for better or for worse?

Between Uncle Kiah's fables and Miss Gorham's logic and literature my immature mind was divided. There seemed to be two horns to the dilemma.

It must be admitted that while there was pure and simple pleasure in the one there was a sense of expansion with some friction in the other.

In the first, life lingered, haunting familiar places and seeking its guerdon in the realization of present joys. In the second were self-denial and irritating obstacles beyond which like an *ignis fatuus* an ever

shining but ever receding genius invited pursuit. Whichever road I might be inclined to take I could never cease to revere my old colored friend. His friendship was so unselfish; his heart so honest and his soul so unsophisticated and pure! So that every night when I knelt by the side of my trundle bed and prayed for others I never failed to say: "God bless Uncle Kiah!"

Ignorant, unlettered, lowly as was his station, and negro though he was, his humor was real, his manhood noble, and his affection sincere. I was trying to make a chair, for a Christmas present to my kind teacher, but did not know how to build it. I went over to the old man and he showed me how to do it, remarking as he did so:

"Dar is allus er way ter do things provided yer know how ter do'm. Some people know how ter do some things but don't know how ter do odder things." To illustrate he told me the following story:

"Ole Mistah Bar was said ter be a berry fine lawyer, but dat was de onliest thing he knew about.

"Now Mistah Bar had two berry fat geese, he had. Dey was not his special diet but he was fattenin' em on sheers wid Mistah Wolf, one of his clients.

"Mistah Bar cotch er mighty cold one day gwine ter court in er snow storm and was ailing wid misery in de breast, and sent fer er doctor.

"De doctor tol' Mistah Bar he mus' hab some fresh milk to drink.



"Now Mistah Bar he didn't have no cow, so he didn't know whar to git any milk, he didn't; and if he didn't git milk he'd die.

"De doctor said he mus' have it.

"So Mistah Bar, he sunt ober ter neighbor Fox's house ter ax him ef he had er little milk to spar for sickness.

"Mistah Fox sunt ober word to Mistah Bar dat he didn't keep any cow (but de rascal was lying all de time) but he got plenty o' milk from his geese.

"Mistah Bar was su'prised ter hear sich talk as dat so he sunt and axed Mistah Fox to please come ober and 'splain matters.

"When Mistah Fox 'rive, Mistah Bar he say: 'Br'er Fox, how is dis? What I hear 'bout goose-milk?' Mistah Fox say: 'sholy, Br'er Bar, dat's all right.'

"An' Mistah Fox, he settin' dar a swinging hisself in his rockin' cheer. 'But you can't milk geese, Br'er Fox,' said Mistah Bar lookin' mighty wise ober his spectacles. 'Dat's an impossibility, Sir, an impossibility.'

"'Shorely, shorely, Br'er Bar. Easiest thing in de worl', sir.'

"'Prove it ter me! Show me somè proof ev it,' shouted Mistah Bar, thinkin' he was in de courthouse an' forgettin' his sickness.

"'You know people don't work fer nuffin, Br'er Bar,' 'plied Mistah Fox. 'Show me de money an' I show you de milk.' [Mistah Bar said as how he'd been sick er long time an' didn't hab de change.]

"'But you had two nice fat geese up dar in de coop. Gim'm one ob dem geese an' I'll show you quick'n er flash de bes' goose milk ye eber see.'

"Mr. Fox he got a bottle of fresh milk in his pocket all dis time.

"'All right,' sayd Mistah Bar, 'ef you ken git milk outten ary one ob dose geeses, I'll give you de odder one.'

"'It's a bargain,' said Mistah Fox. Mistah Bar he want ter see de operation wid his own eyes.

"Mistah Fox say he: 'Sit still, Mister Bar. Youse too feeble. Sit still, I'll go fetch it.'

"'Tell your sarvant ter fetch me a ponger, Mistah Bar.' De ponger was fatched, and Mistah Fox he slide out he do and makes tent ter milk one ob de geese.

"Bimeby he come back wid a flowin' bowl of snow white milk.

"'Dar, Br'er Bar, taste ob dat an' tell me what you think ob it.'

"Mistah Bar was hongry fer milk an' he drunk an' drunk. Den he belch an' he say:

"'Fore Gawd, Br'er Fox I nebber in all my life drunk sich rich milk. You jess go an' take de fattes' one ob dose geese. But fo' you go, you must show me how ter do it.'

"Den Mistah Fox he stan' up, he did an' wid a great long rigmarole he splain to de ole lawyer de ins and outs o' geese milkin' ontwill Mistah Bar wid his belly full ob dat cow's milk fell asleep. Den Mistah Fox flung the goose ober his shoulder and

creeps away ter his own home. Er week or two arter dat when Mistah Bar got better, so he could ride out, he met Mistah Fox on de highway, also er ridin' out; and Mistah Bar 'cused Mistah Fox to his face ob tellin' er falsehood an' ob 'tainin' goods under false pretences.

"How so, Br'er Bar? How so?' berry peart-like, axed Mistah Fox.

"You tole me dat my goose would 'ford me all de milk I could drink. But it's a lie, sir, a confounded lie. Sir, I pulled all de fedders outten dat goose an' not a d——d drop of milk could I get.'

"Mistah Fox, he kinder look wise er minute or two, den he tap his horse lightly wid de whip an' he says:

"Br'er Bar, I'm mighty sorry, mighty sorry; but de whole truff ob de motter is, you didn't know how to do it. You is a first-class lawyer, Br'er Bar, but a d——d poor milker.' An' wid dat he gabe his horse er cut and driv er way."

## CHAPTER VII

A YEAR or two, more or less, unmarked by any specially great event, makes little difference in the annals of time, but in the short period of a man's life, every day may have its determining influence on his destiny.

While the seasons passed by and found me plodding away on the farm, I was rapidly growing in body and improving in intellect. I was getting better wages now and Mammy Sally's health had improved. We were able to make both ends meet pretty handily but had little means left to embellish our humble home. I had avoided all scrapes so far and but for the curse of caste had nothing to complain of to God or man.

Of course I had no society but that of Joe Watkins, who was very friendly and who often came to see me clandestinely, and old Uncle Kiah. I found no profit and less pleasure in associating with other persons of my race whose ignorance and untrained tastes were incompatible with mine. Having no choice but to look upon and watch the trend of social events around me, I noted several small, but important things that were transpiring. Among these was the fact that our genial landlord was growing very partial to my teacher. He had begun



to pay her conspicuous attention. I could often hear of his visits to the Hodgkiss'; of walks along the bay shore and he occasionally accompanied her on Sunday afternoons when she came on her weekly missions to our cabin. I also observed a friendship ripening between Joe and Anna. They were sixteen years old now.

Another and a sadder observation was the fact that Mr. Hodgkiss was making a complete failure at farming.

In trying to apply Northern ideas to Southern crop-raising, he had worked very hard for nothing and it was said he was greatly in debt to Colonel Custis.

It is right here that I would like dearly to take the reader into my confidence and unburden to him my whole heart. But how to do it, I wot not. The thought even of what vain hallucinations I was possessed about this time makes me shudder. But still I will try. It is all over now—that awful struggle; but to refer to it even now fills me with shame and trepidation, so lasting are early impressions.

I desire to do no harm. I am loath to set a pernicious example. I do not care to have it said of me and my book that others in like situation will be influenced to act as I did. Instead of that, I warn them to "fling away ambition," to obey the social usages of their locations. My case is not one to follow; my conduct not to be imitated, although in my outward actions I was blameless.

I have but one excuse to offer. It may not be

presumption in me to believe that I was instinctively an exception. That there was in my blood a hotter flame, in my brain a wider prescience and in my heart a stronger impulse than those which move most youths of my class and station. I would not tell it now for the whole universe, if I were to-day what I thought I was then, for I dared not even admit it to myself—that foolish, idle thing—a bagatelle in itself, an incident as commonplace as the rising of the sun in the morning or the blooming of the daisy in the meadow; but to me a horrid nightmare; a fearful abnormality; a hideous omen; a damnable crime!

I loved Julia Custis.

It had not come upon me suddenly like a flash of lightning or those strange apparitions that steal upon us in the night-time or in moments of mental abstraction; but from time to time, when I saw her in all her childhood naiveté at her foster-father's house; when I caught a glance of sympathy as they led me to the whipping-post and after that as we both grew older, she more circumspect and I more respectful and deferential—all along the now five years of my acquaintance with her, in the dusty field it had been to me a strange and stimulating influence and in my dreams a vision so resplendent and transporting that toil and inequality and the sin of it, were all annihilated and the gross body no longer a bar to spiritual communion. My soul of like color and of ethereal sameness met hers in the fanciful regions of elysium and we were one.

But a rude awakening was at hand and I began to find myself like one who goes to sleep in a boat and who unconsciously drifts seaward toward the bar upon the bosom of a tranquil stream between flowery banks and under blue skies only to be aroused from pleasant dreams by the solemn voice of the majestic but cruel sea.

This powerful passion, I repeat, had come upon me by stealth; had wound its tentacles about me, binding me as the spider enmeshes his victim, until I had neither power to resist it nor privilege to entertain it. All, all that was left me was to look at her and to love her.

But what have I said!

Oh, yes; I realized my worse than folly; the full measure of my unpardonable crime.

I knew I was coquetting with Death and felt it to be, if not just, at least a sure and certain penalty, if once it were known to mortal else than myself.

I might indulge whatever dreams a distorted fancy created; I might in the silence of the forest breathe her dear name and, hyphenating every syllable, dwell fondly on every one; I might, as I had already done, engrave it on the white trunk of every holly-tree in her father's forest. But the very knife would be accursed, and evermore the fear of punishment haunted me and the faintest rustle of a leaf startled me at my frivolous work. Only in my soul there was no appreciation of caste or color. My soul was as white as hers. In the depths of that soul-silence there was no crime.

It was there that the face of the beloved one presented its glory unveiled. It was there the sylph-like form was mirrored in the placid lake of memory and there also crystallized and unborn must forever remain my ill-starred ideal—like the embryonic germ of a paleontologic insect embedded in the quartz of antediluvian days.

I had been brought to Virginia by circumstances beyond my control and by the influence of her genial atmosphere and mellow skies had grown up in that romantic witchery with which she environs her children, only to become a victim to the very forces that had made me a being susceptible to Beauty's charms and a target for Cupid's dart.

But with this brief confidential confession I must proceed.

It was in the month of June and when I was seventeen years old that the good people of the "Neck" bethought themselves of taking an outing.

It was their custom during the summer season to occasionally join families and sail down to the outer beach for a day's recreation. Now, although there had been somewhat of a disintegration of social elements on my account since that memorable day at the schoolhouse (I refer to the day of my trial), the inevitable intercourse between neighbors had healed many of the wounds inflicted then, and although I was still *persona non grata* to many, especially so to the Watkins', the two aristocratic young gentlemen already mentioned in this behalf, and to their set, there still remained enough co-



herence among the heretofore disjointed fragments of the little community to make up a reasonably numerous company of pleasure-seekers.

A day or two before that on which the flotilla was to sail, I was employed at the Colonel's mansion, doing some odd jobs—such as re-hanging pictures, many of them being the portraits in oil of the august ancestors of the family, in their stiff and ancient-looking costumes; the taking down of lace curtains and the adjusting of wire netting to keep out the flies and mosquitos—when I was an accidental, though I must admit, not an unwilling listener to a conversation that was taking place between the different members of the family, appertaining to the aforesaid excursion.

The discussion happened to take a turn as to the advisability of my being one of the party, of course to act in the capacity of a servant.

"I shall be very busy in my harvest field," I heard the Colonel say, "and I do not see how I can spare him."

"But he'll be such a help to us, papa," urged Julia. "We'll need some one to look after the baskets and to wait on us at luncheon."

"And he's such a well-behaved and decent fellow," put in the governess.

"Thank God for the governess!" I mentally ejaculated.

"Yes," supplemented Julia, "he's got to be, well, I shouldn't say handsome, but one of the cleanest and best-mannered darkeys I know, and he keeps his place admirably. It's a pity he is not white."

Oh, ecstasy of joy! What sweeter music might the angels make than that voice uplifted in praise of me! Poor, vain fool that I was!

"But you know, ladies, some of the party might take offence," argued the Colonel.

"At what, papa?"

"Having him along, daughter. You know how prejudiced those people are."

"Not as a menial? They can not object to that."

"What do you think, Miss Smith?" submitted the Colonel, evidently addressing the governess. "Do you consider it advisable?"

"I'm sure they ought not to object. Surely such a thing comes within the range of social etiquette and is perfectly *en regle*," replied the lady who was supposed to be good authority on such matters and whose decision I, myself, most heartily endorsed. For I wanted to go very much.

"But these people, these people," deprecatingly remarked the Colonel. I suppose he would have said if he had continued to express his thoughts, "are very ill-bred." (He never talked about his neighbors.) "Are very squeamish," said Julia, finishing the sentence for him. "One can not treat a person of lower rank with common politeness but one is thought to be out of dignity. I think the American people, as a rule, have very queer ideas about such matters."

"You're quite correct, my dear Miss Custis. Good manners are too often taken for—what shall I call it?—well, for a lack of a decent regard for

the proprieties. I suppose that's a mild way of putting it. I must own I condemn this silly, stilted mannerism which the people of this country affect. Society will take good care of itself without being chaperoned by prudes and guarded by priests. Society is too suspicious of its own peccability, it seems to me."

"I heartily concur with you, Miss Smith, and must confess that those people who are so solicitous about the weaknesses of others and the safety and purity of the social relations 'with their horde of little maxims,' are themselves the most peccable." Then continuing: "I'll tell Jack to come over in the morning to go with us. He's strong and active and we're sure to find use for him," was the Colonel's ultimatum.

I do not think my elation over the Colonel's final decision was as unnatural as it was unwise. I was a boy full of boyish notions, eager for change of scene and employment and (God forgive me) ever longing to gaze upon the face of Julia and to hear her sweet voice.

I had sense enough to know that as long as I kept this to myself I was safe. I also realized that to give the least expression to my feelings would be death.

How long I might be able to do this was the question.

If I had had the privilege of other society—girls of my class—out of sheer necessity I might have been able to turn my boyish affections away from

the all unconscious object of my blind and foolish adoration. But such was not the case, and every recurring summer's suns were quickening the current of my blood. What would become of my worse than foolish infatuation?



## CHAPTER VIII

HAVING acknowledged my crime and now that the truth is out, I can afford to face the reader with a little better grace, and like the penitent who has confessed his sin, I can talk more freely about it, trusting when I shall have told the whole story I may in the generosity of his heart be shriven of my sin.

*all the world love love*  
It is said that everybody loves a lover and it is well that it is so, for of all fools the poor devil who finds himself in that unfortunate predicament stands most in need of some sort of comfort.

I was wild with joy as I stepped briskly across the fields toward the old mansion that morning, clad in a clean, white shirt, thrown open at the throat, a pair of jean trousers turned up at the bottom, above my bare but shapely feet and ankles and a new straw hat on my head, under the brim of which I could feel the soft summer air of the young day tossing my thick locks. The world was as bright and beautiful to me as if I had been born of a princess.

A mocking bird, his throat full of song and his heart full of unrestrained liberty and love, poured forth his multitudinous variations as he flitted from bush to bush along the hedge; an osprey fresh in

from the bay was feeding his little family in his huge nest that filled the top of an ancient pine; the bay itself shimmered under the rays of the ascending sun, and all the world seemed to be rejoicing because I was in love. Poor, foolish boy! What a reflex condition! What egotism!

They were bustling around at the mansion when I got there, that is, the ladies and servants.

Colonel Custis was sitting in his library, dispatching some business that required writing, and discovering me standing by for orders, with my hat in my hand, he said without raising his eyes from his work: "Report to Miss Julia. She'll find something for you to do."

I found her in the dining-room packing the lunch baskets and polite as a dancing master, I "fell" to work under her instructions.

She looked angelically sweet that morning, in her white cambric gown, her light golden hair plaited behind and tied with blue ribbon at the end. A piece of the same also daintily knotted under her chin, and tiny slippers with neat bows of black on her feet.

She was nearly as old as I; was moderately tall and sylphlike in form; her eyes were blue and bright, and her face pink as the inner surface of an ocean shell where the delicate tint fades off into the crystal whiteness of its pearly rim. To serve her was a privilege, had I been a king, I would have bought at the cost of my crown.

She was not only gentle and amiable, but she was

intelligent and a good scholar and sang beautifully. She had kept up with the progress I had been making in my studies, my kind benefactress informing her from time to time, and she knew I loved poetry and the classics; and while the disparity in our stations forbade literary, as well as social intercourse, she was ever mindful of my talents and respectful of my attainments.

Still, she was my mistress and I served her as a slave; and while by not one single act, or deed, I ever crossed the rigid line that divided us—she, the daughter of the richest man in the county, every drop of blood in his veins as pure Anglo-Saxon as any English blood can be to-day, and I—I will not finish a contrast so odious—I surmised that sometimes my unfettered and colorless soul did stand in the presence of hers unabashed and unforbidden and that together, we sometimes walked hand in hand through Arcadian bowers and held sweet converse with “the dead but sceptered sovereigns that rule us from their urns.”

But, however, I might think and dream, I had outwardly to maintain a studied indifference.

The slightest betrayal of my feelings would have plunged me into irretrievable ruin. And who may open the human heart when once the key of deceit has locked the door? I surely had cause to thank God for the ability to keep it locked.

In the open world she was my young mistress, but in my heart she reigned a queen.

But again, I dream,

Three boats with flapping sails were waiting at the landing when we went through the front lawn—the governess, Julia and her maid and myself—the luncheon having preceded us—and the belated Colonel puffing behind.

The Hodgkiss family, the Watkins and others not necessary to mention, were there ahead of us.

We took Mr. Sharpe, at his request, on board our batteau, while Mr. Keene became a fellow-voyager of Mr. Watkins, and his household and everything being ready in the midst of much hilarity and badinage, we set sail.

It was evident, judging from Mr. Sharpe's assiduous attentions to Julia that he was either deplorably enamoured of that young lady or else had a secret regard for the Colonel's broad acres (of which latter assumption, should I have accused him ungenerously on account of any sinister motive, I hope to be forgiven), for he would not sit in any other part of the boat, but beside her, and I truly believe very much to her annoyance, although she treated him civilly enough and teased him not a little by sprinkling water in his face from the dainty tips of her gloved fingers.

As for me, I had stowed myself away well up in the bow of the boat and had nothing to do but to sit and feast my eyes on her whose lovely face and syren voice, like that of a mermaid's held me in such mysterious leash that I was ready to follow her even to the caverns of the deepest ocean had she taken it into her head to start in that direction.



But after awhile the Colonel, who was wedded to his mint julep, called me back toward the stern, so that I might be in a convenient position to wait on him, and I lost my coign of vantage.

The reader may imagine from the flippancy with which I relate these trivial incidents that they were of no more moment to me than they would have been to any other youngster who might have happened to be in that boat with Julia or any other pretty girl, or that, in my egregious presumptuousness, I so regarded them. But he has only to put himself in my place to be able to realize at once that I am writing now as I would have written then, in a strain of feigned nonchalance—a sort of whistling—to-keep-my-courage-up style in the midst of an environment whose very air was alive with demoniacal influences that hedged me about as the waters of the bay we sailed on, and as bold as the black-headed gulls that clamored over our heads.

We tacked ship and I was in the way of the fore sheet.

"You must move, Jack," mildly commanded the Colonel, who was at the helm.

We were much lumbered up and I cast about in vain for space to sit.

"Here, Jack," said Julia. "I'll allow you to sit by me." And as she spoke she opened a sufficient space between herself and Mr. Sharpe. The gentleman had not honored me with a salutation for five years. I do not wonder that he gave me a look of indignation that but ill-concealed a promise of sweet

revenge. I can not think Julia meant to insult him, although it did grievously, and of right ought to have so done. But he smothered his wrath until we went about again, when I resumed my former seat; and we sailed on to our destination.

It was expected of me, being shoeless, to lift the others ashore and to that end and as soon as the keel of the batteau grated on the sand, I leaped overboard and stood for service. I took Julia first, and it is well I did, for I trembled fearfully as it was; so much, indeed, that she said to me as I bore her to land:

"What ails you, Jack? Are you going to drop me?" Nor was it any mischievous ruse on my part, when my staggering caused her, through fright, to clutch me tighter by the neck.

Landing her safely, I performed the same services for Miss Smith and then for the Colonel and then the maid.

"Put Mr. Sharpe ashore," said the Colonel.

It was a bitter pill, but I did it, and I verily believe he made himself as unwieldly as possible, and choked me very much. I stood him on the sand without thanks for my trouble and then went over to Mr. Watkins' boat, at the suggestion of the Colonel, to assist those people also.

Approaching that part of the boat where sat Miss Arabella—that young lady drew herself up scornfully, and spitefully declared I should not touch her.

"Go away!" roared Mr. Watkins. "We can do without you." \*

I turned and deliberately walked out of the water and stood on the beach waiting to see what would happen. Mr. Keene suggested that he take off his shoes and stockings and perform the ceremony of lifting his *Dulcinea* to *terra firma*, to which proposition the young lady aforesaid with a show of affected modesty acceded, as her brother Joe was already on shore waiting for the Hodgkiss's, having it in his mind to see that Anna was safely disembarked on the arrival of their batteau, which was delinquent by a few minutes.

By this time Mr. Keene had Miss Arabella in his loving embrace. But she being fat and weighty and he not over-muscular, they both went down in a heap, the gallant young courtier underneath and his precious burden in her frantic endeavors to keep her head out of the water on top and likely to smother him.

What a commotion! What screaming and splashing! What nuts for me! I looked on in quiet amusement at the sad catastrophe until I heard the Colonel's voice half entreating, half commanding:

"Run in, Jack! Run in and help those people!" When I leisurely strode to the spot and taking up the girl set her on the beach, leaving Mr. Keene to get out as best he could and then going to the Hodgkiss' boat, I waited on Miss Gorham and the rest of the crew except Anna, who was already chatting with Joe on the shore and the ladies all hastening to the relief of Miss Arabella, the men strolled up to the dunes, while the other attendants

and I lugged up the edibles and made a shelter for the women out of the boat-sails under which the tables were spread and the viands laid out.



## CHAPTER IX

MISS ARABELLA WATKINS having been made presentable by the transforming appliances of her lady friends and the ludicrous side of her untoward fiasco fully and freely discussed by the young people and dinner being served, a promenade along the seashore was in order.

In this delightful exercise the whole company, with few exceptions, joined. Colonel Custis, with the sprightliness of a youth of twenty, led off with Miss Gorham. Mr. Keene followed with Arabella. Joe sauntered along with Anna, one eye on his father and the other on the girl. Mr. Sharpe tried his best to amuse and entertain Julia, while the old folks, less interested in one another's individual affairs, sought other pastimes, some gathering sea-shells and others searching for bird's eggs among the tufts of grass that grew between the dunes.

It took me some time to gather up the dishes, wash and repack them, so that when I got out of the tent they were all well down the beach, heading, as I supposed, for some sand-hills beyond, where it had been proposed that the young people who had taken bath robes with them should take a dip, using the said sand-hills for bath-houses.

Near the tent was an umbrageous cedar, which

now that the sun was past the meridian, cast a pleasant shadow toward the northeast and with a heart that longed to be with the party down the beach and a body weary with a round of light but tedious duties, I flung myself down on the sand in the shade and began to indulge those waking dreams which ever haunted me. I had taken no note of time since I lay down. I suppose it had not been more than fifteen or twenty minutes when I heard a scrambling in the tree, and looking that way saw old Mr. Watkins climbing up the other side. I supposed he had not observed me, for he was talking to himself, and when he had reached a fork in the limbs he adjusted himself very comfortably, and turning his eyes down the beach began to express himself rather critically about things in general and especially in regard to those objects which fell within the scope of his vision.

Mr. Watkins was a Baptist, and of course was not blasphemous, but he sometimes used a very indefinite expletive—an expression that had the true ring of a cuss-word sometimes, and at other times, according to the humor he was in, a sort of grateful thank-offering—sometimes it was: "I am to be blessed," contracted in ordinary conversation to: "I'm t'blessed," and at other times when the old gentleman was "riled" as he called it, it sounded very much like "Damned! blast."

On this occasion, there being no one, as he supposed, within hearing, he exclaimed, as he viewed the interesting panorama:

"Dam t' blast, if that old fool of a Custis isn't crazy as a loon. And just to think he hasn't any more respect for his family and his neighbors than to fall in love with that nigger-loving Yankee woman. They tell me he goes down to old Sal's every Sunday afternoon with her to teach that scamp of a boy that killed my ram."

Mr. Watkins had once known that his last statement was an untruth, but had sworn to it in court. Now, it must be proclaimed in his defence he was entirely guiltless of prevarication, inasmuch as he had come to believe in the lie implicitly.

He went on: "An old fool is the worst of all fools; but an old fool in love is worsen that. If he marries that woman, dam t' blast if I ever speak to'm again. The fact of it is, he's been getting crazier and crazier every year of his life for a long time, and since them Northerns come down here he's got worse and worse. What's that? My Joey making up to that Hodgkiss girl. If they haven't took and gone off by themselves I'll agree to eat my head! Never you mind, Joey, I'll have you in better business to-morrow. I'll have you at the plough-handles. I wonder where Arabella and Mr. Keene are? Oh, I see'm now! Ah, that's a good match, that is. Old Keene's rich; only one child. Arabella's sensible, she is. Yes, yes, they're going into the surf. Lots of'm in bathing. Guess I'll take a nap up here in the cool breeze."

I am of the opinion we both went to sleep. I am of a stronger opinion that we were both rudely

brought to our senses by horrifying screams that the south wind brought to our ears some minutes afterwards.

"Arabella Watkins is drowning! Is drowning! Arabella, Arabella, drowning, drowning!"

The sound swept to us and by us like the wail of a lost soul, or more truthfully the wails of lost souls—for it came in many forms, from as many voices; but each separate note in full concord with its harrowing strain bearing the one burden of "Arabella is drowning!"

I was on my feet in a second and Mr. Watkins, seeing me as he slid down the tree, as if he could not trust his ears, inquired of me:

"What's that they say? My God! What are they saying?"

"That your daughter is drowning, sir," I answered as I ran.

I did not hear another word from the distressed old gentleman during that long run, but, ever at my heels, I heard his deep breathing, and ever and anon a grunt of pain as we dashed over the smooth sand like race horses.

The dreadful cry had been taken up all along the beach, and everybody was hastening to the spot; while those already there were running hither and thither tossing their hats, or gesticulating with their arms like a set of crazy people, as they were.

As we came up to the spot opposite to where I supposed the drowning young girl was (for I had not yet seen her), I saw Miss Gorham and Julia



frantically begging Mr. Keene and Mr. Sharpe to go to Miss Watkins' rescue. The young fellows were in bathing clothes as was also Julia; all the young folks evidently having been in the surf-together; but neither of the gallant and faithful aristocrats appeared to be sufficiently moved to undertake the job; but following with my eyes the direction of a dozen or more pointing fingers, I saw far out beyond the breakers a floating speck of black that rose to sight with every wave, and at once realized the difficulty of the task of saving the poor girl.

Joe was loudly called for, but he and Anna were a mile down the shore and knew not what was going on.

By this time the frantic father, having caught his wind, was tearing wildly up and down the shore wringing his hands and crying:

"Oh! my poor Arabella! My poor Arabella! Will no one save my dear child? My God! is there no one brave enough to try to save her?"

Mr. Keene was shivering like an aspen leaf and looked as pale as a cadaver. He had been Miss Watkins' companion in the water when she slipped away from his grasp, both being overwhelmed by a breaker. It was to him that the wretched father looked for some special service toward rescuing his daughter; but neither his heartbreaking appeals, as he fell on his knees before the dripping, shaking young man, nor the tearful entreaties of the women could move him to take one step toward the margin of the sea.

I stood near Colonel Custis, whose usually calm judgment under all circumstances, as one might observe from his puzzled face, was in this dilemma completely balked.

I saw Julia coming over to us, her form a model of beauty but her gait and expression the picture of despair.

Seeing me, she began to run toward me, wringing her hands.

"Jack, Jack!" she cried. "You can save her, if you will. Won't you make an effort? For my sake, Jack!"

For her sake! Had that floating body, buoyed up by its inflated silk bathing-gown, been she and on the verge of the Gulf Stream instead of where it was, two hundred yards beyond the outer bar, I would like a faithful spaniel have dared attempt the task of rescuing her. But a Watkins! I thought a moment, and replied: "Yes, Madam, I will, if you command me."

"Please, Jack," she pleaded. "I do not want to see you drown, but you can save her if you will."

I began immediately to disrobe. There was nothing to do but remove my shirt, leaving my trousers on. In the excitement of the moment I was assisted by the fair hands of the young girl, and tying my suspenders securely around my waist I ran down the sloping beach through the crowd, some silent, some cheering, and a few looking on with sneering countenances.

I heard Colonel Custis say:

"That's a brave fellow, but he'll be drowned!" and as I caught the prayer of my benefactress, Miss Gorham, "God help him!" I plunged into the sea. I was an excellent swimmer and had the wind of a porpoise, but the waves were high and I had a long way to go.

Once beyond the surging breakers, however, my progress was less difficult, and with the still floating girl in sight, I husbanded my strength, well aware that I should need it all on the home stretch.

Approaching her quietly, I impressed her with the importance of a passive submission to all I did or said, telling her if she took hold of me I would drown her on the spot. I took her long hair between my teeth and her head on my shoulder and began the terrible journey to the shore.

The struggle was one between life and death for us both. She lay on her back. I had her head drawn closely up to my neck and she towed moderately well, and although she tried to get hold of my arms she was unable to do so, and by the time we encountered the breakers she was as insensible as a log and gave me no further trouble, although my jaws were tired with the grip of her hair and my neck almost broken by the burden that lay upon it.

But now when only a few rods from the shore the situation became desperate. As wave after wave came tumbling over us, I began to lose my strength, and at every jerk could feel the wisp of hair slipping from between my teeth.

I could see Colonel Custis, Mr. Watkins and

others standing out in the water as far as they could go, waiting to assist me, should I ever be able to reach them, and I could hear faintly the encouraging words of my master and even the clamor of the women on the shore. But I was rapidly giving out, and if the waves failed to bear us toward the shore there was no prospect of our ever reaching it.

From then on I was conscious of only one thing, and that was that I was slowly but surely drowning.

Nor did I seem to care much if I did drown, so exhausted was I from the long struggle I had made.

After that I gave up and knew nothing of what was going on, but was afterwards told that I was caught up on the crest of a huge billow and, with the hair of the girl still clutched in my teeth, dragged up with her on the sands, where I was left for dead, while they took Miss Watkins farther up on the beach and gathering around her proceeded to restore her to consciousness.

I know not how long I lay there all alone, but involuntarily casting up a quantity of water I had begun to revive when I heard footsteps, and Julia came and kneeling by me began to put back my tangled hair and to say:

"Poor, brave Jack! It's a shame they've all left you here to die after so brave a deed. Better and braver than all, you have saved the life of one who despised you, and they've not even thanked you for it. It was for my sake you risked and lost your life, and, black or white, I'll kiss you for it."



And lying there, more dead than alive, I felt on my brow the warm lips, as it were, of an angel, and my satisfied soul once more fell asleep. Many a time after that did I wish that I had never awakened from that sweet dream.

## CHAPTER X

IN writing this, my autobiography, I am not posing for approbation on the one hand, nor do I stand in fear of adverse criticism on the other. The events I herein state are the incidents of a somewhat abnormal career recited in, I fancy to myself, a straightforward manner and to the best of my ability. All I ask is that when I have laid down my pen and written the word "Finis," then, and not till then, let the first stone be hurled at my devoted head; for then all the facts will have spoken for themselves and the reader will be able to sit in judgment on my own as well as the conduct of the other actors who compose the *dramatis personee* list of this drama. I am inclined to make these digressive remarks from the thought that many of my readers will, with some show of approval, join Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene in their cry of "Shame! Shame!" as the two young beaux caught sight of the last scene described in the foregoing chapter, not because of any matter of injustice or prejudice on their part, but simply because, like the two young gentlemen mentioned, they are not yet in a position to judge fairly, as no one is who judges hastily, and without a knowledge of all the evidence in the case of the conduct of Miss Custis, although under

any circumstances of like character many would justify her in her act.

These two friends of mine were as much disgusted with me because I came back to life as they were with the conduct of Julia, Colonel Custis and my benefactress, Miss Gorham, all of whom after they found I was alive took tender care of me, wrapping me up warmly in their own clothing and seeing me safely at home.

If ever a word of praise or a thought of gratitude moved the lips or minds of the Watkins' family I was never informed of it, except that Joe, even with tears in his eyes afterward grasped my hand like that of a brother and in the one smothered word: "Jack," expressed far more than volumes of words or the most eloquent language could possibly do.

I had fondly hoped, while setting no great store on the merits of what I had done toward saving their only daughter from a watery grave, that I should gain at least the respect of the Watkins' family; but a foolish prejudice, based upon unreasonable grounds, is sometimes to be found such a ruling passion that no logic, or circumstance, or service, can overcome it; for prejudice is worse than idiocy.

For that cause such a condition of mind is often called *natural* or *inherent*, and justified on that assumption, although devoid of the charm of rhyme or the stability of reason.

It may be a long time before such a postulate

can be shown to be erroneous, it may never be; but there will still be other philosophers who hold that the truth lies in another direction and that neither antiquity nor prevalence is sufficient evidence to lead the rational mind to a conclusion that runs conversely to all we observe in nature and all we realize in the general progress of mankind.

But whether Mr. Watkins was right or wrong, he was incorrigible and that is all that can be said about it. His obstinacy angered Colonel Custis, and an estrangement grew daily between the two families, extending to others until the whole community arrayed itself against the Custises, whose only allies, for obvious reasons, were the Hodgkisses.

An event which I shall now proceed to relate only served to make the breach as wide as that which existed between the sectaries of Jerusalem and those of Mount Gerizim; or, in other words, the Jews and the Samaritans.

The exposure and over-straining that day in the surf brought on a severe attack of bowel trouble that ran me down in health, and in my weak condition I relapsed into a typhoid fever that brought me to the verge of the grave.

Colonel Custis promptly called in a physician and everything was done for me that medicine and good attention could do, but still I grew worse until all hope of saving my life was abandoned.

Miss Gorham was almost constantly at my bedside, night and day watching over me like a guar-



dian angel, Colonel Custis assisting her, while Julia busied herself in preparing such dainties as I was allowed to eat, bringing them over to the hut in her own hands and sitting for hours brushing away the flies that are always great pests at that season of the year.

In my stupor I took but little notice of anything; I felt no pain; had neither desire to live nor fear to die, but I can even now remember how for an hour at a time I used to lie and gaze up into Julia's face, hardly winking my eyes, in some such manner as an infant when it first begins to fathom the depth of a mother's love and knows no other care but to feast its little heart on its mother's smile.

From the beginning of my illness my mammy seemed to construe every happening as an evil omen, and made up her mind that I was going to die, and so impressed was she with this idea that she almost lost her mind and did nothing else but sit and crone, unable to do the least thing for me, giving me over entirely to my kind friends, but for whose attentions I must have perished long ere I had arrived at the crisis of my disease.

All day and even into the night she would sit in her chair swaying her body to and fro, singing the weird camp-meeting songs of her race; her favorite one having for its chorus:

"Prepare, oh! prepare for the Judgment Day!"

The solemnity of which caused me, in my delirium, to believe that the solemn services of my obsequies were already being celebrated.

By-and-by I came down to the turning point in my illness, and I could see in the faces of all who came to give me aid or to look upon me through the impulse of a morbid curiosity—even in that of Uncle Kiah, who came to see me every day as he stood with his hat in his hand and a pitying expression on his rugged old visage—that farewell—that speechless utterance the untrained can not conceal, however they may try to dissemble.

I tried to convey to them the fact that I was free from pain and not dying, as they thought, for I really felt better, but my tongue was tied by weakness and I could neither move nor speak.

One by one the visitors departed, walking on tip-toe out of the hut, until only my mammy and the faithful woman who had done so much for me, the dear Miss Gorham, remained, the former weeping hysterically and the latter sitting by the bedside ready to close my eyes to a world of injustice and inequality; but a world that, if it contained only one living soul beside my own, would still be to me, with all my troubles, a veritable paradise. So rich is the heart that truly loves!

"My boy is dying!" groaned the woman they called Sally. "What shall I do? He was all I had to look to for bread and meat, and I had learned to love him so well. But I have not done right and this is sent upon me as a judgment," she went on in a strain that nobody who heard her understood.

"Oh! Miss Gorham, I is a poor miserable sinner, an' God orter take me instead of that innocent chile

that never did harm to nobody! I can't stand this any longer," and rising from her seat she rushed across the room, opened a dilapidated trunk and, diving to the bottom of it, withdrew a roll of manuscript which she threw into Miss Gorham's lap and then ran shrieking out of the house.

I noticed Miss Gorham as she took up the paper and began to read it in a casual manner.

It was so restful to me to lie and look into the face of that pure and lovely woman that I could not keep my eyes off her.

She read on, carelessly at first, then as if puzzled over what she read, went back over it again and again, her countenance changing from grave to intensely absorbed interest, then all of a sudden I saw the color fading from cheek to neck and from neck to throat, as if the blood had ebbed away never again to dye with its purple tide her benign face. The manuscript, for such it appeared to be, dropped from her hands.

Recovering, she grabbed it up and read on, her color now going, now coming, as varying emotions seemed to flash from heart to brain and from brain to heart. At times during the reading I thought she would die.

Large drops of perspiration appeared on her forehead and fell on the scroll, but she read on and on becoming more and more intensified until at last she reeled from her chair and fell to the ground.

The sight of her suffering overcame me, and I, weak and worn as I was from days of continued

fever, collapsed and saw her no more until I regained consciousness. How much time had elapsed I never knew, but when I opened my eyes she was leaning on my Mammy Sally's shoulder entreating her to lead her to the bedside.

As they approached, my benefactress, still pale as death and staggering, broke away from Mammy Sally and stumbling to where I lay, fell down on her knees, threw her left arm over me, and laying her head on the pillow by the side of mine wept, and wept, sobbing:

"This is too much, too much! How can I ever bear it! God of mercy help, or I shall die!"

I thought she had gone crazy; that her long vigils had undermined her health, and my conscience smote me for taxing her endurance to that extent and out of sympathy I mingled my tears with hers.

She seemed to realize my condition and the harm so much excitement might do me, and made a supreme effort to compose herself, rising up from the bedside and pacing the floor, moving her arms like I had often seen people do under religious phrensy at colored revivals.

I could not decide for the life of me whether she was rejoicing at the good turn my illness had taken, or whether she was laboring under a fit of hysterics for reasons above stated.

Finally she exclaimed: "Go, Sally, go for my mother! Run all the way! Tell her to come at once! Run! Run!"



As Mammy Sally ran out the door blubbering, Miss Gorham came back quieter, but hiccupping and unable to articulate her words; she took my emaciated hand in hers and folding it fumbled with my fingers as a mother sometimes does with those of her baby, getting up often and going to the door to see if her mother was coming.

I would not have wondered to see Mammy Sally deport herself in this manner, but never would have believed it of one so calm and self-possessed and so equable in disposition as was Miss Gorham.

It was something I could not understand—the beginning of a mystery under whose shadow I was doomed to fight my way to the very verge of manhood; the clearing up of which at that time would have saved me many a pang; but the course of life once started under an evil star has devious ways that lead the weary traveler through many difficulties; and so it was with mine. The patient reader will know it all by-and-by.

The coming of Mrs. Hodgkiss being delayed by some cause, Miss Gorham gradually regained a moderate degree of composure and began to talk to me in gentle and soothing tones, telling me I must get well as soon as I could, assuring me there were better days coming and that soon; painting in rich and glowing colors the glad future; weaving a sort of fairy-tale as a faithful nurse that would beguile a sick and fretful child; dilating on the sweet atmosphere and mellow sunshine of the advancing Autumn; the rabbit and 'possum hunts I was to

have with good old Uncle Kiah, and of all those amusements I took special delight in, until the hurrying feet of the two women were heard on the plank outside the door.

Mrs. Hodgkiss was one of those strong-minded and iron-nerved sort of women, clear of mind and cold of heart to whom sentiment was a stranger and pride and prudence of the highest moment.

She entered the hut in her stately fashion, looking annoyed at the disturbance, whatever it was, that had called her away from home on such an errand.

At sight of her, Miss Gorham jumped up and ran to meet her, falling upon her neck and crying: "O! Mother, mother, mother!"

Mrs. Hodgkiss drew herself up icily, saying petulantly:

"For Heaven's sake, Amelia, what's the matter with you?"

"Jack——" blurted out Miss Gorham. "Jack, Jack!"—pointing to me.

"Pshaw, how foolish! I'm surprised at your conduct. Suppose he should die—what of that?"

"It would kill me too," broke in Miss Gorham.

"Nonsense! You should have better command of your feelings. Why did you send for me? All this is extremest folly."

"I want you to read this, Mother. Only read this," was the reply, as she picked up the manuscript that lay on the floor. "Come out under the tree," she continued, drawing her mother toward the door. The tree referred to was an oak that

stood near the house, growing close to my window, its lower boughs brushing the side of the hut.

Mammy Sally came and, sitting by the bed, began fanning me, her breast still heaving after the long run.

The afternoon was uncommonly quiet. There was no sound outside but that of insects and occasionally the whirr of the war-locust.

Inside the hut there was only the ticking of an old brass clock on a shelf in the back part of the room. I could distinctly hear the two women talking on the outside under the open window but can only report in substance what they said. Miss Gorham's tongue was busier than a weaver's shuttle as she appeared to be explaining the paper to her mother. The latter was silent for a long time and then she said, as if reluctantly:

"Yes, it must be so. Unwelcome birds are bound to come home to roost. But for your misconduct this would never have happened."

"Please do not speak in that way, mother," pleaded my benefactress.

"Ah, well," said the other, "some people are always in trouble—born so, I suppose, and you, Amelia, seem to be one of them."

"For which the parent is often more to blame than the offspring," indignantly replied the daughter. "Surely we ought to be willing to bear our own burdens. I have silently and uncomplainingly borne mine these many long and weary years."

"But what are you going to do about it?" asked Mrs. Hodgkiss.

"Meet it bravely and as a rational human being should," was the reply.

"Amelia, that is impossible!" sternly remarked Mrs. Hodgkiss. "Your step-father is in utter ignorance of the whole business. What'll he think of it? What'll he take us to be? Besides, he is deeply in debt to Colonel Custis, and no doubt looks to you for help. And what'll the Colonel himself do? He's expecting you to marry him; that event is the only thing that can happen to save us from irretrievable ruin. I tell you now, once for all, Amelia, you've got to marry Colonel Custis."

"How can you ask me in the face of that paper to do such a thing? Mother, you shock me."

"Then you must be shocked, Amelia. It is the part of those who do injuries to repair them; for those who do wrong to atone for it, Amelia——"

"Mother!"

"Do not interrupt me. I will have my way. Just consider for a moment the results of your proposed action. Who'll believe the story? They'll say we are abolitionists and have rigged up this unlikely and abominable tale to carry out our negro-loving scheme. The whole county will rise up against us—it has already done it—and drive us out. No, no; it can not be. It shall not be."

Then, whether assumed or real I can not say, this woman began to weep and to chide her daughter, accusing her bitterly of a desire to kill her, to ruin the family and doom them all to a condition worse than death—to indignant and eternal



Then there were more expostulations and finally a breaking down on the part of Miss Gorham, which told of the mother's victory.

Afterwards a silence supervened, broken only by the subdued sobs of the vanquished daughter, then the slow voice of Mrs. Hodgkiss compromisingly:

"I'll tell you what I will do. You may accept that or nothing. I'll permit the woman and boy to be taken to our house. Sally can cook and wash and you may take Jack under your care until such time as you can provide for him to go into some sort of business; and in the meantime the marriage with Colonel Custis must be consummated. Will that suit you?"

There being no reply from Miss Gorham the question was repeated: "Will that suit you? Answer me, or never call me Mother again."

"For the present," said Miss Gorham, absent-mindedly, "for the present." And they came back into the house and silently took their seats as if at a funeral. Miss Gorham, all broken up, her face concealed by her handkerchief, while that of Mrs. Hodgkiss was perfectly dry and as hard as stone.

"Sally," said the latter, rising to take her departure for home, "as soon as Jack gets into condition to be moved, you may bring him over to our house. And if you are willing, we will keep you also and pay you good wages for what you can do in the way of housework. Your indiscreet and panicky figary has made this course as necessary for your good as his. The trouble you colored peo-

ple put us to is beyond calculation. I sincerely wish I had never seen Virginia. Come, Amelia." And looking back at me, and quivering in every muscle, Miss Gorham dragged herself out the door after the haughty woman, leaving me alone with Mammy Sally.

## CHAPTER XI

AND that was that new occasion for scandal, vituperation and ostracism to which I have incidentally referred.

Whatever that other matter was, of which Mrs. Hodgkiss spoke as liable to be a source of mischievous gossip, at that time wholly unknown to me, it could not better have served its purpose than the taking of me and Mammy Sally to live at her house.

It was especially to Mr. Watkins a handy bolo which he wielded with the dexterity of a native of our new possessions and with as little mercy. The truth is we, that is the Hodgkiss family, were scandalized of everybody except Colonel Custis, who never busied himself about other people's affairs or presumed to set up his own tastes and opinions as a criterion for other people.

It has already been presumed by the reader, I am sure, that I recovered and according to the plan announced by Mrs. Hodgkiss to my mother, she and I left forever our humble log cabin and went to live at the house of our friends.

It is rather anomalous, but no less a fact that custom, from a period whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, has established the

rule that there is, nor possibly can be committed, no crime against etiquette so great, or an offence so unpardonable to the usages of society as that of sitting down at meat with an inferior. It was so in the time of Jesus.

Not even the closest contact otherwise is held to be half so demoralizing, undignifying and defamatory as to break bread with an underling.

This custom established so far back in the history of mankind that it must have originated when human beings were little more than barbarians has defied time, change, and civilization to abrogate it.

Even Christ himself with all his infinite power and influence upon the world generally, or upon his professed followers in particular has never yet succeeded in eradicating it.

The same accusation that was hurled at Him for eating with publicans and sinners is hurled to-day against any man who dares to follow His example and the loftier the offender, as in His own individual case, the louder the outcry. Surely, we have not outlived the days of the Scribes and Pharisees.

All sorts of indiscretions may be indulged and are indulged by men and women, especially by men, as one who walks abroad may see, and society embraces them with open arms, either condoning or winking at the slip, but for this one terrible social sin there is neither forgiveness on earth or pardon in the grave.

It was over this very question that Miss Gorham and her mother had serious trouble on our first ar-



rival at our new abode, for although my Mammy Sally was treated in all respects as a servant—an arrangement perfectly natural and agreeable to her—my benefactress contended that I should eat with the family, and so it was settled, she carrying her point in spite of all opposition. And while Mammy Sally slept in the kitchen loft, a room was prepared for me in the main building and by this strange freak of fortune I was installed as a member of the family, in good standing and on terms of equality with the most favored member thereof, while beyond this sacred circle, now regarded as a blot on the body socialistic, and a stench in the nostrils of society, I was to all intents and purposes only Aunt Sally's Jack.

Now, all this kind treatment could not help being enjoyable but elevating also. But I must confess it added little to my happiness. For while in one sense it brought me nearer the plane about which moved the pretty girl I loved so dearly, it, at the same time, removed me further from her orbit, since the nearer I approached her the more she was repulsed by me and all that familiarity that had subsisted between her as mistress and me as servant was cut off instantaneously and no longer working for Colonel Custis, I had no opportunity to see her at or about her own home, or to mingle with her socially. My advancement was in one sense my downfall.

As it was, I was like the second mate of a ship, neither at home in the cabin or welcome in the fore-castle. I was in a sort of purgatory, raised from the

deplorable depths of Hades, it is true, but forbidden to ascend to the company of the angels.

From this dilemma, I saw no prospect of extrication. At the same time I felt all the irony of my forlorn situation. On all these remarkable events Mr. Hodgkiss, the staid and imperturbable Yankee that he was, looked on with astonishing composure, amused and engrossed in his honest but laborious avocation of farmer—not planter, as Colonel Custis styled himself—reading all sorts of agricultural books; sowing a great variety of seeds and working from day to day with wonderful patience and commendable hope, only to see his schemes abort and his crops fail; and borrowing money when he needed it of “neighbor” Custis, who laughed at his methods but never refused him the cash he asked for, while the women, yes, the women of his family; (they were not styled “ladies” any more and perhaps they lost nothing by it) were effectually shut up in the house.

The “cut” made Mrs. Hodgkiss quite sore and was unfortunate for Anna, but Miss Gorham regarded it no more than an eagle soaring above the clouds regards the pop-gun of a boy standing on an ant-hill.

Uncle Kiah, good old soul, was “riled” to the end of his toes. He had reasons for his condemnation of the whole affair.

In the first place he thought he would lose me by the change and in the next place it was diametrically in opposition to all his instincts of propriety. When

I ventured to call upon him, after my installation, he would scarcely speak to me.

"It 'pears ebber sense you cum down here from de North its been nuffin' but fuss, fuss, fuss.

"You've natterly turned de yearth upside down.

"An' dars Mars Cunnel, he's gone got tangled up wid dem people ober dar wus'n er skein ob cotton ebber was; an' ole Mistah Watkins, huh, huh, huh, he's jest gone far crazy, an' I can scasely blame'm.

"It's all d——d nonsense fer ter try to make er 'possum outen er mushrat. You can't make er fox climb up er tree, nor larn a coon ter eat sugar, nor er fox to open oshters and clams."

"How's that Uncle Kiah?" I asked, hoping to divert his attention from the main subject and by that means force him into a good humor.

"You see," he proceeded, getting onto the right track, "Mistah Coon he sunt a berry 'stinguished invite ter Mistah Fox ter take dinner wid'm, an' Mistah Fox he 'cepted de invite. When Mistah Fox got dar, Mistah Coon, he had his table already sot.

"Fust, he had prepared er collation ob raw oshters on de grown' at de foot ob de tree whar he libed, an' up de tree a sumpkus layout ob Spring lamb an' baked goslin'. Den Mistah Coon he says ter Mistah Fox:

"Take er seat, Br'er Fox. Take er seat. We'll hab some oshters fer de first course. Dey is ob excellent flavor."

"An' Mistah Coon, he 'gins ter tackle de oshters but Mr. Fox he sot dar lookin' on—his mouf er

waterin', but not an oshter did he tech. Cause he didn't know how ter open'm.

"Mr. Coon, he says, 'Br'er Fox, why don't yer eat some'n. Has you lost yer appertite?'

"Den Mistah Fox he say, he does, 'No, Br'er Coon, but I don't feel berry well ter day, and oshters don't 'gree berry well wid me.'

"Den Mistah Coon he say, 'Sense you is poly, Br'er Fox, I has some delicater things up de tree—some nice Spring lamb an' some baked goslin'. Come up.' An' Mistah Coon he run up de tree same as er flyin' squirrel, but Mistah Fox, he sot on his haunches, he did an' look up dat ar tree erwhile an' den he clear his throat an' he say:

"Squze me, Br'er Coon, but I'm dead agin' eatin' Spring lamb an' baked goslin'. Good-day, Br'er Coon."

"Er little while arter dat Mistah Fox he sent er note round ter Mistah Coon's holler axin' *him* ter dinner. De weather had been berry cold. Dar was snow on de groun' an' Mistah Fox knewed dat Mistah Coon was berry, berry, hongry; an' he knewed also dat Mistah Coon was mighty fond of sweet things an' dat Mistah Coon didn't eat anything 'thout he washed it fust, so he sot his table nigh er pool ob water an' he made up some nice sugar-balls an' putt on it.

"Ob course Mistah Coon he 'cepted de invite of Mistah Fox and he come waddlin' erlong jest arter yearly moonrise an' he sot down t'de table.

"Mistah Fox he war berry jolly, he war, an' he



say: 'Help yerself, Br'er Coon. Help yerself.' An' Mistah Coon he retches out, he does, an' takes up one ob dem lumps ob sugar an' he takes it in his paws an' washin' it dis way an' dat in de water an' den he opens his paw an' looks fer de sugar an' den looks at Mistah Fox, sayin' in his mind, 'What trick is dis you's playin' on me?'

" 'Never mind dat, Br'er Coon,' says Mistah Fox, seein' Mistah Coon's confustication. 'Take anudder one, Br'er Coon.'

"Den Mistah Coon he try de same thing ober ag'in, almost scratchin' off de pam of his claws ter find de sugar. But dar war no sugar dar. So Mistah Coon he got up, he did, an' was 'bout ter say 'Good ebenin', Br'er Fox,' when Mistah Fox, he say, kinder easy-like, 'When you gits right good an' ready ter play er joke on anybody, Br'er Coon, don't forgit dat two can play at de same game.' So dat's whar I larn'd dat er Fox can't climb er tree nor eat oshters, nor er coon eat sugar."

On the day I buried "Ruler," now several years ago, I promised to take a hunt with the old man, as the reader will observe and I thought this a proper opportunity to fulfil my engagement.

There was, in Miss Gorham's mind, a plan, so she said, to send me away to school the next year following and I did not know when another chance might offer for me to do the old fellow so much honor, and anxious to show him that changing conditions did not change hearts any more than changing skins, I proposed to remain until supper, partake

of his simple fare and in the evening walk a short distance with him through the woods.

Negro and dog were both approaching that period of existence when a departure to the Happy Hunting Grounds of the other world was imminent, so imminent in fact, that I might never again be permitted to indulge with them the favorite pastime of my boyhood days. But as it turned out after supper they were both alert for the sport; their zest not a whit abated, if their limbs were stiff, their eyesight and hearing impaired and their gait unsteady.

The old fellow was pleased at my suggestion and began to prepare the evening meal.

I had noticed when I entered the house that a pot was hanging on the crane over the fire, sizzling a merry tune, and emitting a savory odor which, I cannot deny, had much to do with creating within me the desire to prolong my visit into the evening, for I was sure the old Nimrod was cooking some sort of wild game worth staying for, and so it proved when he swung the pot over the hearth and extracted therefrom with a pair of flesh forks a very large snapper, tumbling the well-boiled amphibian smoking hot into a spacious wooden trencher and then dissecting the tortoise, piece by piece, salted and peppered it and dusting it slightly in flour transferred it to a frying pan, from whence when nicely browned he served in the same pan with corn pone and boiling coffee in tin cups.

To do me honor, all these delectable viands were placed on a small table instead of the bench from which he always took his meals when alone.

With his white head bowed low in his plate the old man said a fervent grace and being hungry, I went to work and ate voraciously.

I often now sit down to more dainty repasts, each hightoned dish labeled with highfalutin names in a foreign language and sigh to think with how much greater relish I feasted that evening at Uncle Kiah's on fried snapper, turtle gravy and cornbread.

After mine host had washed his dishes, lighted his pipe, fed the faithful old hunter and prepared light-wood and matches, an axe and a bag for the varmints, we set out, the old man overflowing with good spirits and chattering pleasantly as we walked forth into the woods through a cart road that would take us well down into the swamp. Coming to the river we crossed it in a canoe to the other side. The night was moonless, but starlit, and the young Autumn air cool and refreshing, as well as fragrant with the perfume of pine and gum and cedar and myrtle, combined with the scent of dying wild flowers, more readily diffused by the action of the falling dew.

We had not proceeded more than half a mile before "Rover" treed well down ahead of us and at some distance from the road.

"Speak to'm—'Rover,' speak to'm," hollered Uncle Kiah, encouragingly; and as the dog stood by the tree and barked without intermission, the old man exclaimed joyfully:

"Dat's a 'possum! Well done, 'Rover,' well done! You see Jack," he continued addresssing himself to

me, as we moved quickly down into the woods. "Ef it had er been er coon, dat dorg would er made er circle arter he treed 'cause he knows dat coons don't most commonly stick t'de tree, dey fust goes up. Dey runs up dis tree an' dat, ter fool de dorg. Den de dorg what knows his business, he takes er circle, he does, ter see if dat coon's done stopped dar or jumped offer dat tree an' gone t'annuder. Speak to'm, 'Rover,' speak to'm!"

And away we went, Uncle Kiah stumbling over the roots and into the stump holes and I following easily behind, carrying most of the luggage; it being a matter of strictest hunting etiquette never to go in advance of the dog's owner when approaching the sacred spot where the victorious canine has checkmated his wily prey.

Once opposite the place where "Rover" was barking we quit the pine woods and pitched headlong into the thick bramble. It happened that in doing so, we encountered a mass of green briars that earnestly disputed our further advance into their particular domain. But Uncle Kiah with a resolution beyond his years, cursing and tearing, creeping and climbing, now held firmly on every side by the spiky thorns that not only pierced his clothing, but tore his flesh and then minus a patch of his trousers here and there, disengaging himself with an effort, whooping between times, the well-known refrain: "Speak to'm 'Rover!'" and addressing himself to his tormentors in not very complimentary language such as:



"Let go er me! Don't you hear me? I'll smash ye ef ye don't let go'er me! You d——d tarerfying brars, you! Speak to'm 'Rover,' speak to'm! I 'clar ter Gawd they've torn my old duds nighly offen me."

On the other side of the bramble was a clearer woods and reaching there after a scuffle that had nearly denuded both of us, the old man took a trot, calling to me:

"Come on Jack. Dat's er big 'possum, I knows. Come an' I'll show you er beauty. Come on!"

I supposed Uncle Kiah in his state of excitement imagined he was outstripping me, but I was at his heels all the time, laughing to myself at his queer antics.

Suddenly the old fellow's foot struck a stump-hole and he fell sprawling to the ground.

"Never mind me, Jack. Press on! De damn stump-hole done gone git in ter my way er purpose. Git ter de tree quick es possible!"

I never was able to tell why the old fellow was in such a hurry to arrive at the tree, for that was stationary and the dog would have remained by it all night. But it was always thus with Uncle Kiah; and his undue haste had caused him many a bleeding shin and bruised knee.

So I went on and had struck a light by the time the old fellow had pulled himself together and joined me, completely exhausted.

The tree was a sapling. We knew the right one, for "Rover" was jumping up at it as far as his old

paws could carry him, gnawing it with his blunted teeth and eagerly gazing up into its leafy top with as much certitude as if he actually saw the animal clinging to its upper branches.

"See'm Jack? Hold de light dis way. Golly! Dar he is! an' er big un too! Dat's de way, Jack. Alus 'member dat. Big 'possum allus climb up small tree. Small 'possum allus climb up big-tree. Big 'possum allus satisfied wid hisself. Little 'possum want ter show hisself off. Dat's de difference. Nebber try to show yosef off, Jack."

Then taking the torch out of my hand he went on: "Climb up dar, Jack, an' fotch'm down. Dese ole arms an' legs er mine done climbin' long er go."

It was an easy job for me to land the sly and slobbering beast into the gunny-sack and with a chuckle of delight from Uncle Kiah, we put out the light after reaching a road where there was good walking and went on for another. As we went along the woods was more dense and the road darker.

"I'll tell ye a secret, Jack," said the old man.

"Yer see it am berry black down here on de groun', but up dar towards de top ob de trees you can see de drift of de road an' likewise de sky an' de stairs. Don't furgit as you trabel through life ter look up'ards. Dat's my 'ligion.

"I haïnt no shoutin' Mefodist; but I is 'ligious arter dat.

"You see a berry good fren, allus makes er bad enemy.

"Fire an' water an' even wittels is in dat way. So Gawd is a all-powerful fren', but a dre'ful enemy.

"Be sho yer make Gawd yer best fren'."

I asked him how was the best way to do that. His simple answer was

"By trustin'm. De best way fer us ter show our 'fection fer anyone is ter trust'm.

"Ebery man dat lubs an ummon an' ebery ummon dat lubs er man trusts one annuder. Whar dar is no trust, dar is no lub.

"Any man dat's er feerd ter trust his wife, he don't lub her. He only lubs hisself. Huh, huh, huh! How can er man lub an ummon he's jealous ob? He jest doubts her 'cause he doubts hisself."

I confess the old man's philosophy was too deep for me at that period of my life to appreciate, but in calling them to mind since then many of his odd precepts have struck me as having more wisdom in them than I had supposed.

As we walked on, the voice of the old dog far ahead brought our footsteps to a halt and after listening a few minutes we felt assured that he had struck the trail of a raccoon.

Between us and the dog was a deep branch, spanned by a long corduroy bridge and beyond the bridge higher ground with alternate thickets and clearings where scattered here and there were huts in which lived indigent and vicious white and colored people. The locality had, from time which antedated the war, been known by the soubriquet of "Piggin,"—a word whose meaning had been lost in the lapse of years. It was the toughest sort of a place and only a few days previous had been the scene of a cruel and dastardly crime.

An old woman living with an only daughter had been robbed and murdered by a ruffian who had forced his little boy to accompany him—and her hut burned. The daughter, a girl of fourteen got away in the darkness and was the sole witness of the crime.

The murderer had made his escape. The boy also was still at large having managed to elude the vigilance of a posse of citizens who were searching for him night and day.

When we arrived at the foot of the bridge, we found that the trail led across the branch and both dog and varmint were playing a game of hide and seek among the huts and thickets of "Piggin."

We were loath to cross over the bridge, having no notion to venture at that time of night and so far from home, into such a lawless neighborhood, so we stopped there and sat down to wait, hoping the trail would double and recross to our side of the swamp. I suppose we passed nearly an hour in this manner, the dog crying at short intervals on the track and Uncle Kiah and myself growing impatient at the long delay.

We might have tried to call him off, but that was futile unless we were closer to him and besides, we were not anxious to betray our whereabouts for fear of molestation and perhaps assault.

The old hunter looked up at the stars, yawned and said:

"Jack, it's time ter be gitten outen dis woods; let's cross ober and git de dog and go home. We've got to cross de riber you know."



I very readily assented and we crossed over on the "Piggin" side of the branch as quietly as we could.

Passing the bridge road at right-angles was a bridle path running north and south, parallel with the bog, but on much higher ground. "Rover" was occasionally crying to the south of us and we followed the bridle path in that direction.

The trail was leading us farther and farther away. We quickened our gait and coming up with the dog dragged him off the scent at the edge of a clearing, which to our surprise was the desolate home of the woman before referred to.

We halted a moment, looking at the ghostly chimney that rose silent and and ghastly in the gloom of night, when as Uncle Kiah remarked in a sepulchral tone:

"Dis is no place fer we'uns," I heard the tramp of horses and the jingle of bits up the bridle path coming toward us.

There was time for us to do but one thing and that was to drop down by the side of the path among the huckleberry bushes and lie low, if we desired to escape observation and about this there was no question, so we accomplished the feat at a moment's preparation, going down upon our bellies like logs. Uncle Kiah caught "Rover" by the nape of his neck and forced him to earth, covering him up with his coat, just as the head of a long procession of horsemen in single file came up the path.

The hoofs of the horses were within less than six

feet of our heads; we could smell the fumes of their hot sweat, and many of them either smelling or seeing us shied as they passed. The men were either masked or wore caps with visors pulled over their eyes. They were led by a stout farmer-like appearing man who rode a horse that was familiar to both of us. It was pumiced-footed and we recognized its gait, as we afterward did its rider.

Behind the latter rode a young girl sitting side-wise on an improvised saddle of blankets belted to the back of her horse and about the center of the cavalcade was a youth, bound securely to a horseman, back to back.

There must have been fifty horses at least and as many riders.

As they passed us in dead silence, they turned and filed into the vacant lot forming a circle around the spot where only a few days before the hovel had stood.

Being in the background where it was unlikely we would be seen, and curious to know what was going on we stood up in mute amazement at the strange proceedings.

Dismounting, they lifted the girl from her horse and disengaging the boy from the back of the man to whom he was tied, set him also rudely upon the ground, leading them both into the ring.

By this time I had discovered that the leader of the band was our neighbor, my arch-enemy, Mr. Watkins and his chief lieutenants were Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene. Of the others I failed to recognize

a single man, but from their dress was led to believe they were all farmers. What was going on inside the enclosure, I could not at first make out but they seemed to be holding some sort of inquest with Mr. Watkins as judge, the boy a prisoner and the girl an accuser.

I could see between the horses by the glare of several torches they had lighted, the pale face of the youth, a lad of not over thirteen, frail of body and collapsed with fright and the girl pointing at him and apparently accusing him.

My curiosity getting the better of me, I whispered to Uncle Kiah telling him to remain where he was, then cautiously crept up to within hearing distance from the place where the mysterious exercises were going on. For the first time, I saw that every man was armed to the teeth, some with shotguns, some with pistols and others with knives. Just as I got in position, I heard Mr. Watkins in a rough voice demand of the boy:

"What have you got to say to that? Tell us, where is your father?"

Shaking as with an ague, the poor, terrified child replied: "My father did it. He made me go with him. I swear I did not touch this girl or her mother. I was hiding in the woods right over there, sir. I don't know where father is. I do not. Please do not kill me."

There was everything in the youth's appearance to touch with pity the heart of a savage. There was sincerity in his very simplicity. His voice was child-

like, his head and feet bare, his breeches short, exposing the most spindling of legs, his arms those of a weakling, his collar open at the throat, his clothing ragged and his hair matted on his head. But his face although wrought into an expression of indescribable mental agony, was uncommonly handsome and innocent-looking, while the contrast between their helpless victim and the murderers who had brought him there to take away his young life, was so great that it looked to me like a pack of famished wolves surrounding a lone and helpless lamb—monsters in human guise who dare to walk abroad among God's children in broad daylight, worse than wolves, for they combine the brutality of the beast with the ingenuity of the human intellect. I saw and knew what they were doing and while the boy pleaded in his heartrending, childish way for life—life for his mother's sake, they held a low conversation among themselves and then with fiendish celerity drove a stake into the ground, muffled the boy's mouth, bound him to the stake and began to pile up the dry branches of fallen trees all around him and emptying a can of oil on the heap.

From that day to this I have been haunted by a scene I never can forget and a self-condemnation I can never condone; and when I shall stand before the presence of the Great Judge I fear this murdered boy will rise up and accuse me of his death.

But I was a coward and stood there and saw him burn. Saw the—Oh, not—not men! I can find no word for them. I saw *them* cock their pistols and



place them in the hand of the young girl, guiding the bullet to a vital spot as if it was not enough to destroy one human life, but they must pollute that of another.

I saw it all, coward that I was and so long as men are cowards, so long will such scenes be enacted.

I hold it folly to educate men and women and leave out the element of bravery. Truth and knowledge are useless weapons with which to combat evil if behind them is not a stout arm and a brave heart.

God forgive me! But I cannot think of that unrighteous holocaust—that awful scene, it costs no effort to recall, so indelibly is it engraved on the tablets of my memory—the heart-rending shriek of the boy; the infernal pyrotechnic display; the X-ray glare of the flames illuminating the burning body, bringing out for a moment in bold relief every limb and joint and organ of that poor child and then shooting upward in a pillar of lurid fire lighting up the woods all around; the desolated lot; the fiend-like faces of the mob; that stripling of a girl forced to be a witness of and an accomplice to the crime—I say this horrid picture never comes up before me that I do not lose faith in my kind and confidence in the final prevalence of truth and justice.

And yet on this very day—a day of mid-summer in the early years of the twentieth century, such scenes are literally transpiring in half of the States of this great Union and we read the account of them with scarcely a moment's notice and are silent lest, forsooth, somebody's feelings are hurt or the sovereignty of some sister state menaced.

Strange government and stranger people!

An hour afterward when we left our hiding and ventured nearer the devoted spot, the lynchers had departed carrying the girl with them, darkness had again settled down, the woods were wrapped in gloom and we stood with hats off in awesome silence on the verge of the gruesome place where a young, and no doubt innocent life, had but lately gone out in fearful agony, the smoldering coals still smoking over the hellish altar and the midnight zephyrs swirling the poor victim's ashes upward into the face of an outraged Deity. The old man broke the ominous quiet:

"I say, Jack, that ar er 'proper' sight ter behold! Let's we uns go home."

And from that day on neither of us ever went night-hunting again.

## CHAPTER XII

MEANWHILE I continued to reside at Mr. Hodgkiss's house with nothing to do but study.

Miss Gorham was a woman of splendid education and under her tuition I advanced rapidly, taking a general literary course.

You may be sure the radical change from a life of toil on the farm to one that involved only mental employment with ample time for amusement, and from the squalor of a log hut to the comforts of a refined home, was duly appreciated.

Since my adoption into the family I perceived that my kind benefactress had grown more reflective in her demeanor, but tenderer in her deportment toward me. Her hair was turning greyer and her face paler. I could not doubt but that she was laboring under some mental strain and made up my mind that the cause was to be discovered in the bone of contention over which she and her mother frequently indulged—a controversy more or less acrimonious—a matter of divergence of opinion that seemed to be after every argument as unsettled as ever—a perennial *casus belli*.

At the same time I had reason to believe from Mrs. Hodgkiss's increasing irritability that my dearest friend was by no means ready to surrender her point, whatever that might be.

After a while the frequency of these bickerings became unbearable to the participants and my bedroom being contiguous to that of Miss Gorham I overheard them agree to another compromise which was that the main question in dispute should be left for one year in *statu quo* and during the armistice I was to be sent to a northern institute of learning, the selection made being Harvard University.

After this there was a respite to family embroilments and greater cramming of lessons that I might be able to matriculate.

There was wide open intercourse with the Cusstises at this period, as there always had been from the advent of the Hodgkisses and I trust always will be, never a day passing that did not see the jolly old Colonel at our house or some member of our household at his. He was as kind to me as when I served him on the farm or at table, but Julia, alas, was estranged! Our changed relations had placed a gulf between us I dared not attempt to cross.

I met her often going and returning from house to house for she and Anna were the best of friends and I often encountered her while she was paying visits to our folks and she always spoke to me politely but never familiarly.

The old relations were severed and it looked to me to be forever.

It was not because I was not well-dressed, or lacked manners, for my good friend supplied me with wearing apparel superior in quality and in



more fashionable style than that of the average young man of the neighborhood and I received from her the very best rules of deportment which I practiced with the most fastidious care. But all this had but one effect upon Julia.

Her relations with our family were the same they always had been, but my promotion had acted in an inverse ratio, decreasing instead of increasing her friendship; and I felt the cut sorely at the same time the consuming fire of admiration and love for her glowed hotter and hotter.

I could not understand why it was and like the poor man in the fable worried my life out of me to solve the riddle, even if by so doing I might suffer the loss of my present elevation and be forced back again into my former miserable condition—a price I would gladly pay to hear her dear voice once more call me "Jack" in her old familiar manner, were it coupled with a command to perform the most menial of all services. I can look back at the situation now and understand it all; but love never reasons or sees anything in its proper light, for he, we all know, is blind and as foolish and illogical as he is blind. "Happiness is not this way," I thought and I longed for the lowly hut beside the woods, the chorus of the katydids, the hooting of the great owl down in the swamp; and my arms ached for the ringing scythe and the grasp of the ax helve.

It was at this time more than at any period of my life that I found in Uncle Kiah that solace I could nowhere else obtain. For although he told

me some plain truths which I had verified to my sorrow, his sympathy was genuine and if he made a wound by his blunt humor he never failed to offer balm for the injury.

I was to go away in a few days and I could not depart without one more last visit to the old man's cabin. I found the old fellow at his usual occupation—flagging chairs with bulrushes and singing in a minor key the following ditty:

"De jay bird sot on de hickory limb,

Duda, duda.

"He wink at me an' I wink at him,

Duda, duda, da.

"Big possum climb up little tree,

Duda, duda.

"I look at him an' he smile at me,

Duda, duda, da.

"De nigger he tink he mighty smart,

Duda, duda.

"White man hitch him to de cyart,

Duda, duda da."

I happened to be wearing a new suit of clothes and when the old fellow raised his eyes from his work and saw me as I entered the door, he did not salute me cordially, as he invariably did, but simply asked me to come in and take a seat. He did not like to see me dressed up.

When I inquired about his health he did not at first reply, but laying aside his half-finished chair, began to chip up a plug of tobacco which he rolled into the palm of his hand and stuffing it into the bowl of his pipe lighted it from the end of a poker,

took a seat by his little table, drew a puff or two and began in a garrulous manner to express his thoughts as follows:

"You ax me how I do. Well I is right smart an' tolerable in health, than' Gawd! but jist at dis particular time an berry much upshot in mind.

"Yer see them people from de Norf come down here and freed de niggers, makin' dem b'lieve dat dey was gwine ter be white.

"Dey didn't fool Kiah 'cause Kiah knewed only Gawd 'I'mighty could do dat an' knowin' dat I done tole all de niggers dey was de biggest fools on yearth" and as he finished the sentence the old fellow brought his clinched fist down on the table with a crash that nearly upset it.

"Now any man hates ter be made a fool of," he went on. "Don't you know dat?"

I assured him my views were in perfect accord with his on that point.

"Den why don't you practice what you preach," he demanded authoritatively.

I besought him to explain himself.

"E'plain!" he vociferated. "It's you what's made a complete jackass outen me. Jist as I begin ter get some credit for havin' some gumption here you comes and knocks my preachin' all in de head. You goes, you does an' comes down here a nigger an' now you'se 'sociated wid white folks. Dat's de mostest barbarous thing I ebber knowed!"

I tried to assure him that it was not my fault but rather my good luck; that I was not whiter than I

had ever been and that for some reasons I had rather be what I had been than what I was, intimating that I was happier in my former than in my present condition and therefore took great delight in coming to him for consolation.

"Dat's it, dat's it!" he exclaimed jumping to his feet. "I done gone tole yer so, didn't I? Hah, hah, ernudder fish outer de water! Ernudder darkey outer his spear. Look out, Jack, look out! If yer don't watch yer gaps dar'll be ernudder fire in de woods an' it'll not be ober in Piggins next time. It'll be on dis side ob de branch. Ole Mr. Watkins'll be arter you like er betty martin arter er crow."

Reference to that awful scene and the mentioning of Mr. Watkins' name filled me with fear and disgust and I must admit with more of the former than the latter.

Indeed, since I had become acquainted with that bad man's true character I had stood in dreadful fear of him lest he and his two young friends either one or all should do me some secret bodily injury.

The late lynching had caused some talk, aroused some indignation in the community but that was all.

Colonel Custis tried in vain to bring the ring-leaders to the bar of justice but although he had suspicions as to who they were the evidence was not obtainable and so the affair had gone by, the perpetrators of the crime left unpunished and the stain on the county and State remained to reek in the nostrils of all good citizens and to await the retributive wrath of an avenging God.



"Please don't speak of that," I said. "It makes me shudder to think of it."

"It was er proper sight ter behold, Jack. But nobody keeps count when er nigger's missin'. 'Twarn't so befo' de war when er good buck was worf' er thousand dollars. Dat's why I say we wus better off den, dan we is now. An' dat's de argument dat's mostly used agin dem dat sot us free. Gawd A'mighty put er mark on Cain 'cause he killed his br'er Abel an' it looks ter me dat he's neber gwine ter take it off. Dat must er been a powful sin, Jack. An' ef Gawd did take off dat color yer can't eber make me believe dat er nigger'll eber be happy in er white skin any mor'n er chile can be happy wid er clean face. You take dat ole dorg, dar an sot 'im up ter de table, put er towel 'round his naked an' er knife and fork in his paws an' vittles on his plate an' tell him ter eat. Do you s'pose he'd like dat as well as if you'd throw 'im er bone an' let 'im take it out ter der dung'll an' lie dar and gnaw on't? You take er 'way from a nigger his terbacker, his watermillion, and his fat 'possum gravy an' his sweet tatters an' what's leff 'm den? Nuffin. Yer might jist as well cut his throat.

"De mos' unnat'ral sight I eber saw ('cepts dat burning business) is er nigger wid er tall hat an' er crowtail coat. He's outer his place."

I knew it would be useless to argue with the old fellow, and while it was plain that he was hitting at me in his quaint remarks I was sure he loved me at heart and although you could not have persuaded

him for your life to acknowledge it, he was glad to see me so well taken care of. But he was determined to give me another dig in the ribs and he began by chuckling to himself:

"Huh, huh, huh. Den dar was Mistah Jackdaw, a wery proud sort ob a bird eben yit. He was once er berry respecterble member of de febery tribe, commonly well thot of if he was a culled individual.

"But Mistah Jackdaw he got bery high notions inter his haid, he did. Wheneber he walk out he switch his tail an' hold up his haid like er gentleman hoss in de spring of de year, like as if he naterly 'spised de yearth he wak on. Now de Jackdaw he couldn't fly in dose days, so he prayed ter Gawd ter gin 'im wings so he could fly just like the eagle and the grand-lad and de hock. But de Lord who allus knows best what is good fer his chilluns, He argufy wid Mistah Jackdaw; an' He say; 'Mr. Jackdaw, you is best off as you is. You has nudder got de eye ob de eagle, nor de scent of de grand-lad nor de claw of de hock. You'll nudder be eagle, hock nor buzzard. You can sarve your purpose better by bein' er good Jackdaw den a half-way sort ob anything else.'

"But dat foolish Mistah Jackdaw he 'sisted on it an' at last Gawd gin' him wings, He did; an' Mistah Jackdaw he fergit he's nothin' but a common jackdaw wid a par ob wings and he strut about like if he was er mighty big man. But it warn't long er'fore he got bery hongry an' he tried ter ketch er sparrow fer his dinner, but he find he hab

no sharp claws to hold'm so he had ter let'm go. Den he wen' about ter find some carn but he found dat de grand-lad had er cinch on all de dead hosses an' cattle, so he hops ober in de cawnfield an' 'gins ter pull up de farmer's cawn. Den pop, pop, pop, goes de farmers gun an' down goes Mistah Jackdaw.

"Yer better not fly too high, Jack, fer de higher er bird flies de more guns is panted at'm an' if he habent got wings like de great eagle ter fly up an' hide hisself in de clouds he's shore ter git hit. Look out, Jack, or Mistah Watkins hab you yit." In this way I was entertained by my old friend many an idle hour during these last days of preparation for college.

### CHAPTER XIII

MEANTIME, the day of my departure for the North was drawing nigh.

Had I been other than I was, I might have rejoiced to see it come for I had ambition to become a learned and useful man.

What exquisite pleasure it would have been to me to bid adieu for a few short years to her I loved so dearly, to climb the heights of Parnassus and returning to a happy home brimful of lofty aspirations and noble plans for the future, prick out my course across Life's Chart; and then to stroke smooth the dove-white breast of Love." But alas! for what purpose was all this I was going to do? What would education, polish or talent avail? Nothing that I might do, nor anything that might be done for me could change my destiny or wash away the stain of my birth.

It was only a few days before I was to set out on my journey, that a mask ball would be given by Colonel Custis in honor of Julia's seventeenth birthday.

The genial host had generously invited all his neighbors without regard to past misunderstandings not omitting even those who had maligned him on account of his friendly intercourse with our family,



not one of whom had the consistency or self-respect to refuse to accept the invitation. They were trusting, I suppose to find some new cause for criticism or else could not resist the temptation to indulge their carnal appetites, for the Colonel was known to be a good provider and on such occasions invariably set a sumptuous table, as well as dispensed the finest liquors and best brands of cigars. Of course nobody will suppose for a moment that I was included among the invited guests. All the other members of the family were, however, and when the time came it fell to my lot to keep house. I must say for Miss Gorham however that while she did not expect me to be honored with an invitation she at first refused to leave me at home alone but was afterward prevailed upon by her mother to attend.

There being no one among our folks that desired to participate in the dancing, except Anna, the Colonel made arrangements to entertain Mr. and Mrs. Hodgkiss privately in another part of the house than that thrown open to the young folks, reserving the library for a *tete a tete* with my dear Miss Gorham.

It was scarcely expected that the Watkinses and their friends Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Keene would be present. It was said they had so declared themselves; but they went, nevertheless.

Mr. Sharpe's sensibilities had been put to a severe test at Julia's conduct toward me that day on the beach, but as the "jingling of the guinea helps the

hint that honor feels," so the Colonel's broad acres and fat bonds had in them a healing balm for whatever of disgust he might have felt on that occasion, for the time would in all probability arrive when all these things would be Julia's and as she was now a young lady of seventeen and in herself a thing of beauty and a joy forever, it behooved him to be up and doing. It goes to say he lost no opportunity in trying to secure both girl and fortune.

It was to this fortunate side issue that I owed my immunity from present molestation; as I knew full well that only the fear of offending the Colonel and losing the prize he hoped to win prevented him from deluging me with those phials of wrath he had in store for me and only waited a convenient season to pour out to the last dreg upon my devoted head.

This I had learned, and much more, from Joe Watkins, whose undiminished attachment for our Anna still brought him clandestinely to our house, and whose friendship for me was as true and abiding as it was in the days of our earlier boyhood.

For that and other good and sufficient reasons I guarded my secret well and, like the young Spartan concealing his fox, hugged the forbidden passion close to my heart the while it was gnawing at my vitals.

The gay party, the opportunity it afforded for pleasure, for social enjoyment and interchanging of youthful feelings and ideas and all the endearing methods of pure and delightful intercourse only

sat my teeth more and more on edge and made me more deeply conscious of the fact that I was accursed. The throes of maturing manhood were surging within me.

The strength of a vigorous youth thus far un-abused and unsullied tingling through every muscle, nerve and limb made me pine for freedom, for air, for scope, for action, and I stood not yet at bay, but like a gaunt and hungry lion of the desert as on some high and distant rock he views with wistful eyes and tail-lashed flanks the grazing herd in the green valley below.

To feel like this inwardly and compelled to act the part of a lamb outwardly—worse than that, to be a dog and to have to submit to the abuse of my enemies on the one hand and to endure the patronizing favors of friends—what condition could possibly be worse?

Who can wonder, then, that when they had all gone to the party, and I was left alone with my rebellious thoughts, the indiscreet and foolish idea occurred to me to conceal my identity and appear at the ball?

Joe had ordered several costumes to be left at our house, where he had come to dress, among which was a suit representing the outfit, I think, if I mistake not, of a knight of the seventeenth century.

Any how, it consisted of a plumed hat, knee breeches, court shoes, a belt and short sword.

Trying it on, I found it fitted me to perfection. I dubbed myself Sir Walter Raleigh, and selecting

a mask with curtains to hide the lower part of my face and the back of my head I sallied forth on my daring venture at about ten o'clock in the evening.

It was quite likely the masqueraders would unmask at midnight, before which time I should have to retire. But I would have at least an hour and a half to indulge my fancy, and if possible under cover of my impersonation secure an opportunity to speak a word to *her*.

It required no little self-command as well as tact to manage so delicate and dangerous an affair, but there was excitement in it, a chance to work off some of the superabundant pressure that I was laboring under; and above all and over all was the absorbing desire to stand, if but for one brief hour, at the side of Julia Custis and feel myself her equal, that, if for no other reason, I might realize the manly feeling of doing her the honor of kneeling at her feet; not as a menial, but as her peer—the *noblesse oblige* of a princely lover.

When I reached the old colonial mansion the guests had all assembled and the sweet strains of the violin and louder tones of the piano were sounding from the ancestral hall.

Every part of the house was blazing with light and servants busy plying their vocation from dining-room to kitchen.

At the door on the piazza and at the windows were gathered many colored people, among whom I observed the hoary head of my dear old friend, Uncle Kiah.



It was my good fortune to encounter Joe at the threshold of the hall door, and whispering a word in his ear I took his arm and we walked in together.

Once in among the throng I confess I felt both insecure in my disguise and ashamed of my temerity. I would have given my right arm to have been safe at home.

But I was in for it, and my only hope was to play my part well. If I should fail and be discovered there was no telling what my fate would be. Certainly the greatest harm I could do myself would be to incur the displeasure of my kind protectress and the anger of my good old master. I imagined all eyes were bent upon me. In fact they were, for my costume was unique for its elegance, the chief reason why Joe had, with the best of taste, laid it aside.

My white plume was the most conspicuous object in the hall, and I know my whole get-up became me—that is, became my bodily proportions admirably.

I also noticed that my jaunty velvet cloak with its gold lace was not the least attractive feature of my dress.

To overcome my embarrassment was my first duty, and after accomplishing that difficult task, with a great effort I found myself able to get along better, for to my great relief I assured myself that I was perfectly incognito to all but Joe.

By a singular coincidence Julia was Queen Bess. I recognized her the moment I put my eyes on her.

The grand march was just finished and many of

the young fellows were crowding about her for the first cotillion. It was neither innate impertinence, nor bull-headed presumption that caused me to step forward and join the group. I had unconsciously entered into the spirit of the play. She was queen and I courtier.

Instead of Aunt Sally's Jack, I was Sir Walter Raleigh—no longer a menial but a man, and all the glory of manhood arose within me. It was a sensation I had never felt before—the realization of a dream, the fulfillment of a desire that comes only once or twice in a man's life, and the strenuousness of courage gave me confidence that was at once sustaining and aggressive.

"Your Majesty!" I saluted, bending almost to the floor.

"Ah!" exclaimed Julia, returning the salutation in her queenly manner. "Here's my most favored knight, Sir Walter Raleigh. The consonance of history, as well as the logic of events, compels me to accept the attentions of my favorite servitor. Make way, gentlemen, the queen will give you audience later. For the present I must indulge the pleasure of a dance with Sir Walter," and with that she took my arm. I was delighted, entranced. I had never danced at a ball in my life. But I had seen dancing in this same hall when a servant of the family, and Anna had taught me at home some steps, the knowledge of which stood me in good stead, and I, leading my partner to the head of the set, we began to dance one of those old-time cotil-

lions they yet affect in rural communities to the ancient tune of "Moll Brook"—a rollicking sort of hop, the figures of which did not fortunately require much astuteness to learn, or very difficult footing to execute, and we were soon lost in the merry maze of gliding forms and tripping feet as we kept time to the melody of the prosaic old song. Dancing in the same set and directly opposite was a young man in the costume of a Light Horseman of the Revolution, magnificently booted and elegantly spurred.

It required but little sagacity for one acquainted with him to spot him. It was Sharpe, and I could almost discern through his thin mask the discomfiture he felt at his disappointment in being denied the first dance with his sweetheart. He had purposely jostled me once or twice in the promenade, and when the set was up and just as I was about to offer my arm to lead my partner to a seat, he thrust one of his rowels against my ankle, tearing my hose and pricking my shin.

It required all the patience I could command to prevent me from retaliating then and there, for he made no apology, although I had to stoop to disengage the disk of the spur. But I disdained such rudeness, and at her request escorted Queen Bess to the piazza instead of a seat.

"I'm forced to confess, Sir Knight, that I fail to identify you. I think you must be a stranger to the 'Neck.' If so, is it too much for me to ask if you come from far?"

I was heated with excitement and eager to improve every moment, knowing that I must soon depart, not only from the entertainment, but from the State, so I very indiscreetly answered:

"Yes, your majesty, I am a stranger and from a distance, but not so far as not to have heard of the exceeding great beauty and lovely amiability of Miss Custis, who lives in this vicinity and who has graciously condescended to favor me with her company on this delightful occasion."

"I perceive your perception is as keen as your flattery is impertinent, Sir Knight; you should know better than to presume on so short an acquaintance. I fear you are more of a heartless flirt than an honorable cavalier," she said.

"Our real acquaintance has yet to be made, madam. I beg your Majesty's pardon. Were it not for the liberty which this impersonation affords me, I would not dare to take such unpardonable license. I deem it to be one of those occasions when one may speak in jest words that, like you and I, may be masked, or otherwise, as those to whom they are addressed may choose to take them. I meant them to be sincere. If I have offended, I crave your forgiveness."

I could see that my audacity was perplexing her. My manner, if not as fulsome as my language, was too imposing for that of a stranger, and I suppose if she had not been so curious to find out who I was she would likely have cut me short.

But a woman will sometimes, like a bird too



eager to inspect the gaudy colors of its charmer, flit very near the danger-point to satisfy her curiosity.

"I must regard you, Sir Knight, as a very great dissembler or a very saucy fellow. Not to do you injustice, inadvertently, I will give you the benefit of the first construction. May I inquire when you arrived in these parts?"

"Only to-day, Madam, I came with a friend," I replied. "That is," I added, "as Sir Walter Raleigh. It is only as impersonating him that you must know me to-night. It is best for us to keep up the delusion, as I might lose caste by losing my assumed character." I was intoxicated with the scene and went on: "But the night is glorious! Let us move farther down the piazza where yon moonbeams checker the floor through the trellised vine of the honeysuckle. Or would you go back to the hall?" And then came the simplicity of the girl—the ingenuousness of the child:

"If I knew who you were, Sir Knight, and you had proven yourself to be as worthy a gentleman as you are a cavalier, I would accompany you anywhere, within reason; but my governess would think it pert in me to spend so much time with a stranger, and I must leave you to enjoy the moonlight and the sweet honeysuckle alone. I shall be careful to see who you are at the unmasking. Meanwhile, I shall not forget the romance connected with the occasion. Shall I say *au revoir*?"

There was a sweet simplicity in her voice and

manner that filled me with compunction of conscience and overcame me with sadness and regret, Regret that I had deceived her, and sadness that the time was near at hand when I should see her no more.

Must I tell her who I was, or leave her in utter ignorance as to my identity? It was not hard to answer the question. Unfortunately an incident answered it for me, and entirely contrary to my decision, as well as my desire.

All the time I had been talking I had not observed Mr. Sharpe standing behind me and evidently listening to our conversation. But just as I turned to see my companion back again to the hall, I encountered him. My ankle was still paining me, and the sight of him suddenly brought my mind to it.

I should have passed him by, however, without notice, had he not studiously planted himself before me, obstructing my way toward the door.

"Will you kindly let us pass?" I said, forgetting to disguise my voice.

I suppose I betrayed myself, for he said, turning to Julia: "Miss Custis, are you aware of the personality of your escort?"

My companion drew herself up, indignant at what she deemed gross impudence on the part of the young man, and was about to reply when I, knowing that my ruse was discovered, bent over and whispered:

"It is I, Madam, Jack! I place myself under your protection; pardon me for this naughty freak;

keep my secret from the Colonel. Go! Go, Madam! Leave me! Quick!"

Speaking a sentence with every breath, and excited as I was, I could not help noting the effect of the sudden discovery of this cruel imposition on my innocent victim. For a whole minute she stood immovable, while I was still impatiently urging her to retire. Nor was it that I cared now for my own safety, but for her dear sake.

"Go, Madam," I entreated; "please go! Only this man (referring to Sharpe) knows of this unfortunate affair, and he, coward that he is, will not dare to expose you. I have an affair to settle with him, and will entertain him a few minutes outside."

I had never thought once of flying myself, which would have been the most feasible plan and the safest both for Julia and myself; the thought of punishing Sharpe for the insult in the ballroom and his sneaking conduct on the porch having caused me to entirely forget everything else; but seeing that Julia was about to shriek, I swung around on my heel, flung my mask on the ground and snatching Sharpe's from his face, slapped him twice in the mouth with my flat hand leaped the porch-rail, encountering Uncle Kiah on my way, who exclaimed:

"Ef dat aint dat debel Jack, I'm er liar. 'Fore Gawd, he'll git killed yit." And then, running with all my might, never ceased my flight until I reached home, drenched with perspiration and so disgusted with myself that if I had had the means at hand I verily believe I would have made way with myself.

## CHAPTER XIV

WHEN tamed by sober, second thought, I could not imagine how I could so far forget myself as to run headlong into such scrapes as I have spoken of in the preceding chapter. That I was not overhauled and punished severely for my reprehensible conduct on the night of the ball, I had only to thank the diplomacy of my *friend*, Mr. Sharpe, who felt that in accusing me, he would only expose himself to still greater humiliation and my former mistress, who, for some reason best known to herself, permitted the affair to go by.

The affray had elicited only slight attention, so I afterwards learned, only the colored people being witnesses to it, and the governess coming out on the piazza just at the time I was making off, observing that some disturbance had taken place, conducted Julia to her room, and while it is reasonable to suppose the latter related the circumstance to Miss Smith, the two at all events kept the fracas to themselves.

I was heartily glad the whole affair went by without reaching the ears of Miss Gorham. I hardly think she would have cast me off as incorrigible; but she would have been highly displeased and deeply grieved at my ruffianly behavior, and to save her



from pain I would rather have died a thousand times.

But after all, the experience was beneficial, in that it was the means of relieving me of some of the steam that had been generated in my blood and afforded me a taste of the forbidden fruit of equality, which, after all, involved certain responsibilities which I found were not in reality. "flowery beds of ease," but at the same time obstacles that I fain would have surmounted, though they were as high as Chimborazo, were only the way open for me to rise to the effort to win that goal I was destined, judging from what I then knew, never to attain.

And now came the day for me to go to college. And again, I asked myself the question: for what?

First, to take a general literary course and after that, law, perhaps, at Columbia University in New York.

This was the astounding program. That Miss Gorham possessed the money in her own right, there was no doubt. She had become, so I had learned, at her father's death, sole heiress to his comfortable estate, save the portion which legally fell to her mother as his widow (every cent of which good, harmless Mr. Hodgkiss had dropped in the furrows of his farming operations), and was fully able to bestow upon me every accomplishment that money might provide; and while I was as grateful as one in my forlorn condition, viewing it aside from what she had made it, and from the bottom of my heart, had never ceased to thank God for such

phenomenal good fortune, I was old enough and experienced enough now to regard her scheme as an old maid's whim—a freak of fancy only, so illogical, as well as impractical and inexpedient did it appear. There was no other reasonable view to take of it, or anything to be seen in its results but a waste of money for her and a garlanding of me as a sacrificial victim of social expurgation.

Nor could I help thinking how much better it would be for her if the good people of the county would, like me, lay her partiality and affection for me to that cause and thereby finding an excuse for her conduct, pitiful as it might appear; instead of jumping to the conclusion that she was only following the bent of her education, and ascribing her motive to a morbid and to them a vicious tendency to revolutionize society and to encourage that most abhorred and unmentionable social crime which perhaps for its prevalence in the South is more despised because better known there, but which is to those people, as well as, to all American people, the *ne plus ultra* of atrociousness.

It was with such feelings that I, another Pip with another Miss Haversham for my guardian, was about to leave home for Harvard University.

On the afternoon previous to the morning of my leave-taking I found myself walking across the fields toward the woods. I was on my way to take a parting look at the old hut in which my mother and I had lived so many happy days, and to say farewell to Uncle Kiah. I called it farewell for the

old fellow was failing very rapidly. "Rover" had lately died, and the kind old master must in the due course of nature, soon follow his faithful servant.

Our cabin had not been occupied since we left it to go live with the Hodgkiss people, and was in a deplorable condition. The lot was all overgrown with tall weeds and golden-rod.

There was no door to the house, and as I walked in over the rotten plank a rabbit sprang out by me and went scurrying toward the thicket.

Cold desolation had laid its hand on everything that met my eye. The decrepit old thatch and mortar chimney stooping with age, had left the smoke-be-grimed gable and the jambs, where once I stored the delicious sweet potato, were out of doors. I heard a rustling in the corner among the rubbish and with a whip-cord snap a black racer whirled himself upward and out of the little paneless window in a flash.

An owl fluttered overhead in the rafters and a bat, disturbed from his afternoon nap, went circling over my head.

Seating myself on a block of wood that lay in the middle of the floor I gave rein to memory and was soon lost in the sacred recollections of the past. What changes time had wrought!

Here, a ragged boy, I had passed the long days of my youth in blissful ignorance. Here I had been sick, nigh unto death, and here I had dreamed of the little girl over yonder in the great house across the fields, and I asked myself the question: What

greater happiness had my advancement brought me? What greater inconvenience might it not impose?

Had it not been the cause of her estrangement? Had it not put me farther away from her? I could not now be even her servant.

O Freedom! O Civilization! Are the pleasures ye give commensurate to the burdens ye impose? Are the shackles ye break, more binding than the chains ye forge? Is human progress worth the price it demands?

Ah, who would leave the syren's abode, did not the strong hand of an unseen, but almighty Mentor, thrust him into the troubled sea of life that he might take an oar on the bank beside his toiling fellows and row like a galley-slave that he might at last reach—not the home of his father and the embraces of his mother, as Telemachus did, but a cold and dreary pinnacle of fame, or perhaps to fill a colder grave beneath the crumbling marble.

Sadly I turned away from the broken idols that lay around me as painfully suggestive as the ruins of Carthage to the mind of the lonely old Roman general and passed on to take my leave of my dear old friend.

I found him at home and he welcomed me with unusual cordiality. He knew I was going on the morrow and spoke of the kindness of Miss Gorham, illustrating his remarks in the following fable:

He called it:

"De Groun'-Houn' an' de Grasshopper."

"De Groun'-houn' an' de Grasshopper boff libed in de same tater patch.



"Dey was allus banterin' each odder fer er race and Mistah Grasshopper bein' biggotty-like, challenged Mr. Groun'-houn' ter run'm er race from one eend ob de tater patch ter t'other.

"So Mistah Groun'-houn' being rite natur'ly tormented ter deff by Mistah Grasshopper's braggin' all de time, at las' took'm up.

"Dey was ter run down de middle ob 'two tater rows all de way from eend t'eend.

"Now, when anybody's gwine ter 'form any gret work he mus' have frien's. Can't do anythin' 'thout frien's, Jack, 'cepts ter die.

"So Mistah Groun'-houn' he chooses, he does, Mistah Mole ter be his frien', an' Mistah Grasshopper he chooses Mistah Butterfly ter be his frien'—an' dey got ready ter start.

"Huh, huh! dat Mistah Grasshopper, he was er cunnin' fellow. He knew'd as how he could jump ober de tater wines an' de grass, an' dat Mistah Groun'-houn'—poor fellow, had ter go underneaf de groun'.

"Mistah Grasshopper and Mistah Butterfly dey laugh at Mistah Groun'-houn' an' Mistah Mole an' make fun ob'm.

"Den Mistah Groun'-houn' he say:

"'Br'er Grasshopper, you'n Br'er Butterfly 'll laugh outen t'other corner ob your mouf himeby, when dis race is ober,' an' off dey went.

"Mistah Grasshopper an' Mistah Butterfly war bery kereless-like at de fust, but arter er while Mistah Grasshopper he say, he do: 'Br'er Butterfly,

we'uns better hurry up. I see de groun' crackin' mighty fas' down dis tater row.' But Mistah Butterfly, he 'plied, he did: 'Pshaw, Br'er Grasshopper, don't git scarrit. He not dar. Dat's shorely not Br'er Groun'-houn'. How you think he run fas' as dat underneaf de ground?'

"Den Mistah Mole, he say: 'Run back, Br'er Groun'-houn'! run back!' So Mistah Groun'-houn' he run back.

"Den Mistah Grasshopper, he put his mouf ter de groun', an' he ask:

"'Dat you, Br'er Groun'-houn'?''

"No answer. Den Mistah Grasshopper he run 'way back and he say: 'Is you here, Br'er Groun'-houn'?' an' Mistah Groun'-houn' he 'plied:

"'Yes, Br'er Grasshopper.'

"'How yer gettin' along?' axes Mistah Grasshopper.

"'Poorly, poorly, Br'er Grasshopper. Berry dark down here.'

"All dis time Mistah Mole he was er rootin'.

"Den Mistah Butterfly he say ter Mistah Grasshopper, he did:

"'Come, Br'er Grasshopper, let's go ober yonder in de cawn fiel' an' git us dinner. Br'er Groun'-houn' won't git t'de eend ob dat tater row in two days. You'se got plenty ob time ter git you're dinner an' den go back an' beat'm mor'n half way.' So off dey goes ter git der dinner.

"But Mistah Mole he keep er rootin' an' Mistah Groun'-houn' he er followin' arter'm, so when Mis-

tah Grasshopper and Mistah Butterfly gits back from der dinner dey sees Mistah Groun'-houn' and Mistah Mole er settin' up on der las' tater hill er dustin' ob der paws and er laughin' ter crack der sides."

Then he gave the moral in these words:

"Er smart man can git dar now and den by hisself. But er far fool can git dar ef he hab er good frien', eben if he's blind, deaf and dumb. But de bes' man dat eber libed can't git dar ef he hab bad frien's."

Uncle Kiah's fable was no doubt plagiarized as to the race, but his introduction of the two attendants was ingenious and original and his application apt and appropriate.

"You hab er mighty good frien', Jack," he resumed, "an' you ought-er 'member her t'de day of your death.

"Ef you hadn't er had sich good frien's as her'n de Cunnel, ole Mr. Watkins an' dem young fellers'd had yer hide on de cawnstack long er go."

After this there was a long silence, the old man sitting with bowed head as if in a doze. But I knew he was not asleep. He was thinking, I know of how lonesome he would be when I was away. At least I gave myself the credit of it, and I am sure I was correct.

He had outlived his day and generation, and like an old decayed pine-tree standing in the midst of a field of waving corn, far removed from its kind, or its kind far removed from it, so Uncle Kiah stood

alone, bowed with age and ready to fall. As I said, his dog was dead, and there was left him only the unsatisfying recollection of savory dishes of snap-pers and 'possum. The scratching in the barrel in the jamb at eventide had ceased and the dainty marsupial might travel his midnight rounds at his own sweet will and he and his fellows now hold high carnival in the persimmon trees, regaling themselves to their heart's content on the delicious fruit, for their old enemy could hunt no more.

"So you're gwine er 'way whar you come from when you was er little feller?" he remarked at last, breaking the silence.

I told him I was.

"So, so," he soliloquized. "Wonderful, wonderful in natur! I'm powerful sorry ter see yer go. To tell yer de trouf, it's a rale high-burnt sacrifice. My days is almost numbered, an' afore yer gits back I shall be dead and gone, like de res' ob'm. I'se git-tin' mighty ole; can't sleep half de night; hab er misery in my haid almos' all de time; can skasely see at all; my jint is right smart painful. When I walks down de paff I staggers dis way and dat, and ebery little good-fer-nothin' stick of wood dat lies er 'cross ob it looks ter me like er pine-tree. 'Rover' is done gone died, an' as fer 'possum, I neber 'spects ter be able ter taste ob dat luscious varmint agin.

"Ef I had so much as er quarter I might buy one dis Fall, but I 'clar ter Gawd, I haint got er single penny, not eben ter git a chaw terbaccar."



How many pennies had he earned for his master?

My good friend, Miss Gorham, furnished me more spending money than I had use for, and having a silver dollar in my pocket I slipped it into the old fellow's bony hand, telling him to purchase some tobacco with a part of it and to secure with the balance the first 'possum that came along.

"I will see," I said, "that they keep yon in potatoes from the house while I am gone."

Overcome by what seemed to him such a munificent charity, he sat as if nailed to his seat, turning the bright coin over and over in his sleek palm, his lips parted and his red gums showing between them, his black face radiant with good humor and framed between tufts of snow-white beard, making a picture for an artistic study, and finding no words to thank me, he broke the silence by saying:

"It 'pears ter me, Jack, dat Gawd made de silver money fer de white folks and de copper fer de black. Dis is white folks' money an' you is white as dis dollar is. Still, dey call you er nigger. I'm mighty thankful t'ye fer it, an' hope and trest ye'll allus prosper, eben if yer is outen yer spear." And then raising his eyes to Heaven, he said, with the unction of a saint: "May Gawd a'mighty bless an' comfort you all de days ob your life! Amen!"

He had risen to make the prayer, and as he stood there, his rugged form angular and tottering, worn out toiling for others, a tear rolling down his face and his eyeballs turning back into their sockets, I felt how small and insignificant I was, sitting there

in my fine clothes, compared to that old patriarch of African blood, born in the cradle of slavery, nursed in the arms of toil, all the days of his youth and manhood spent in giving his master's family bread; and now about to resign a life that had never been his until no longer of use to anybody, he was allowed at last the privilege of surrendering it to the God who gave it. From whence shall ever come his recompense? And I thought if it was ever right to bring about such a condition, if it was ever right to sustain and perpetuate such a condition, if it is still the glory of any man to boast of the righteousness of such a right and to extol the name and memory of those who claimed, or still claim that right, as well as the right to traduce his memory and to oppress his descendant, then Christianity is a mockery, human sentiment a farce, and the war that put an end to the institution of slavery, a dark and bloody crime for which there was no excuse and in the ages of eternity no pardon.

"God don't make money, Uncle Kiah," I said. "Man does that. If God made it I suppose he would give it to all alike, as he gives the earth and the air. But there are many good people that get little money."

"Den ef Gawd made de yearth fer all, why is it dat some people hab got so much an' udder people so little, er none at all?"

I was not long in finding out that fools can ask questions that wise men cannot answer.

This old hoary-headed son of Ham who could

neither read or write had propounded to me a proposition that a Malthus or a Henry George, both unknown to me then, had filled volumes to elucidate. How was I, a mere boy, to enlighten him?

I thought a moment, and then replied evasively, somewhat as follows:

"I suppose it all comes of the perversity of mankind.

"If men would not war against each other, but all live in peace as brethren of one family, it might not be so. Men fight. The stronger whip the weaker and enslave them.

"That is the way it goes," I said in my weak manner, unable to find better argument.

"Now you're gittin' ter de pint. Gittin' hot, as de chilluns say when dey play hide de switch?

"But who made de udder man weak? Dat's de question."

I was silent; glad to hide behind some subterfuge.

The old man went on:

"Dar's Mistah Watkins. He's allus talkin' 'bout blood—Nanglo Slackson blood. What sorter blood is dat? I 'spose dar is er diffunce in blood—dar must be. De 'possum blood haint de same as de rabbit blood, nor de hoss blood de same as de hog blood, nor de nigger blood de same as de Nanglo Slackson blood. Dat is, dey say so. Dar is sartinly er diffunce in blood."

"But, Uncle Kiah," I interrupted, "the Bible says that God made all men of one blood. Skin may be

different, but all blood is the same. It is breeding that tells, not blood."

"Is you sho ob dat?" he questioned excitedly, now intensely interested.

"Yes," I replied, "quite sure."

I was about to say "environment," but being certain that my old friend would not understand the meaning of the word, I changed the line of my argument and began again:

"You know, Uncle Kiah, that in a flock of sheep there are often some black ones among the white ones."

"Jest so."

"Now," I resumed, "if there are more black sheep than white ones there will be more black lambs than white ones. So, if the farmer wants his sheep to be all white he kills the black sheep and eats them."

"Ah, ha! ah, ha!" exclaimed the old illiterate philosopher. "I see it! I see it! Ef er man can kill off de black sheep 'cause he no like dat color best, Gawd can kill off de black man likewise by cuttin' off his wind, er mixin' him up an' makin' him white."

A ray of spiritual light almost transforming in its influence leaped to the old man's face. He sprang to his feet with the agility of youth.

"Hol' on dar! hol' on dar! I has it! It is de rebellion ob Gawd. All de clouds hab been breshed er way from dese ole eyes dis berry minute. I see it now. Dat's how you is so light-colored, Jack. 'Dat's de reason.'" Then sinking down into his chair again he began to soliloquize:



"Yes, yes, dat's why dese new niggers what's been born sense de war, is whiter dan de ole'uns.

"Dat's why der har is straighter, an' dar noses longer, an' dar lips thinner. Y'er don't see nigh so many cole black people now-a-days as yer used to. In ole times er cole black nigger was wuff twice as much under de hammer as er merlatter, 'case he was healthier an' stronger. Now de black'uns is de weakest, an' de merlatto-one de strongest, and dey makes out better dan de black-uns. Gawd is er good jedge of beauty.

"He gwine ter kill off de black'uns 'case He likes de white color best, an' He's gwine ter make 'em all white finally. Dat's it, dat's it. De worl' is turned upside down. Niggers is a turnin' white. Dar's Mistah Charnock, de young doctor, an' Mistah Slocum, de school-teacher, an' many others; all dese people befo' de war was nothin' mor'n poor white trash. Now dey is great folks, and set back in Mar's Kunnel Custis' parlor like's ef dey belong dar; an' 'mong all dem rich an' mighty men what had hundreds ob acres of lan' an' dozzens ob niggers, dars not one left, 'cepts de Kunnell. Gawd's er gwine ter kill off all de black niggers like me, an' mek de udders whiter an' whiter, till dey all gets er like.

"At de same time He's er raisin' up de po' white folks an' bineby dey'll all be eq'al an' dat'll put er stop t'all dis fuss 'bout wotin' an' nigger dis an' nigger dat.

"Gawd's fonder ob de white color. He's tired ob seein' de po' white trash under de foot ob de 'risto-

crat; He's long 'go tired of seein' de black man er 'scuse fer trouble, an' de noise of chains an' de cry of de 'Red Betty,' an' He's weed'n out de tars by killin' out de black darkey an' er raisin' up de white trash. Glory be ter Gawd!"

The old man stopped his discourse for lack of breath. His manner, his simple language, uncouth as it was, and his philosophy had a strange effect upon me, and for a minute or two, while he did nothing but slap his hand on his attenuated thigh, I was lost in reflection at the wonderful scope of his vision. It was nothing less than inspiration.

After a while I arose, and going up to him, held out my hand to say "Good-bye." He grasped it firmly, saying, "Gawd bless you, Jack. He has made you er forerunner ob de new race. You is er sample ob dem dat is ter be. Ole Kiah must pass er way. His days almost eended. He is er sample ob what has been. You is er sample ob what is ter be. I'm not er feered ter go, 'case I'se borne de burden an' de heat ob de day. I hab made bread fer many moufs, an' like er ole hoss, is fit only now fer de bone-yard. Out dar, dar is no diffunce. Up dar (pointing his long skinny finger toward the ceiling), up dar, dar is no color." And grasping my hand fervently, he bade me good-bye.

## CHAPTER XV

I BEGAN on the morning of my departure for Cambridge to help my dear friend, Miss Gorham, to pack my trunk with feelings of great pleasure.

It was not that I wished to leave her, for nobody who knew her and had felt her influence could ever get weary of her sweet company.

But I was glad to get away from persecution, from ostracism, from the reach of Mr. Watkins and the machinations of his two associates; and last but not least, the storm of passion that was raging in my bosom. And here I would inform the reader that I mean not any of those baser susceptibilities of the human heart, but that one supreme and over-ruling sentiment we cherish for another so unique in its character that there is nothing like it in the whole universe of God. We call it "love."

I had taken leave of Joe the evening before and must say I think he was very much affected. Part of this was due, I suppose, to the fact that I had played the part of an excellent Pandarus between him and Anna, and part on account of real affection for me, notwithstanding the attitude of his father towards me. We had never quarreled over anything.

We went out behind the barn and wept together, and after a long talk I accompanied him half-way to his home under the protecting shadows of the evening.

He told me of new plans that my enemies were laying to entrap me, and said that for that he was glad I was going where they could not do me any harm, saying: "If you remain here, Jack, they're bound to kill you."

He also informed me that he had long since guessed my feelings in regard to a certain young girl, and shuddered to think of the risk I ran.

I assured him he need not have any fears, that I would never betray myself after this, as I had learned a good lesson from my foolish escapade on the night of the ball, that *she* was to me as one dead, and I would try my best to put her out of my mind, which was all a mess of falsehoods, for at that very moment I was bleeding for her at every pore; this seemed to satisfy him and wishing me God-speed he bade me adieu.

Contrary to my expectations, but much to my embarrassment as well as satisfaction, the Colonel and his daughter came over the morning I was to leave. It may have been a coincidence or it may have been on purpose to see me off, I know not. At any rate, I took it in the latter sense, and so it might have been. At any rate, I was vain enough and hopeful enough to thus consider it.

Miss Gorham was much affected at seeing me go and had been in tears all the morning. A mother could not have been more affected.



I dressed myself in a brand-new suit of clothes she had provided for me, and she had pinned a carnation in the button hole of my coat.

I fancied myself that I looked very respectable and was happy that Julia should see me thus attired; so I came down stairs looking, as I supposed, like a young gentleman of quality, my curly hair, downy mustache and commanding height, detracting nothing from my tony appearance.

I bowed with dignity to our visitors, as I entered the room and took a seat in front of them.

Julia nodded her head without calling my name; but the salutation of the Colonel was warm and patronizing.

"Why bless my soul, Jack, you look as if you'd just jumped out of the bandbox. I declare I never saw you appear to such advantage. A handsome fellow, Miss Gorham, a handsome fellow," he exclaimed.

My worthy patroness acknowledged the compliment for me, I not knowing what reply to make; while Julia's eyes fell from me to the floor and from the floor to me with nervous rapidity. Whether she approved of her father's flattering remarks or no I was unable to say. "Indeed," went on the Colonel looking first into the face of one member of the family and then in that of another, "You do honor to the kind people, who have taken such a lively interest in you and I have no doubt you will, by your future conduct, prove yourself not ungrateful to them for it. You were always a very

good boy and I trust you will always continue to be so. And good luck to you, Jack, wherever you go." I thanked him in monosyllables and was glad to have him address himself to some one else, I was so embarrassed.

Mr. Hodgkiss cleared his throat, however, and remarked in his drawling way, speaking as much through his nose as his mouth:

"Yes Jack's a commonly fine lad, and I calculate he'll do all right. We all think much of him because he's Amelia's (meaning Miss Gorham) pet and it is to her he owes his present good fortune; we kinder hate to see'm go but it's best for all, I dare say."

"How does Aunt Sally take his going?" I overheard Julia in a whisper ask Anna who was sitting near her.

"Oh; she's crying too. Of course she is pleased to see him looking so well, but you know how it is with mothers; they always hate to part with their children. But she seems willing to give him up."

"I suppose so" remarked Julia, incidentally.

"Ah, me!" sighed the Colonel, "this brings so fresh and vivid to my mind the day I parted forever from my dear boy, when he was leaving for Yale the last time."

"Then you had a son, Colonel," asked Mr. Hodgkiss.

"Yes, yes, a lovely boy—my only child. He was the pride of my life—the only hope I had of perpetuating my name and family.

"He was a noble fellow. His mother died when he was an infant, leaving him to my sole care. I brought him up to be the finest specimen of a youth you ever saw. But he went off to college and that was the last of him."

"Died," suggested Mr. Hodgkiss, sadly.

"Yes, I suppose so; although it was never my privilege to know, sir. He suffered himself to be led into an affair of honor, which I have since been informed terminated in the death of his adversary. After that unfortunate fracas he disappeared, I suppose to escape the officers of the law. But the most rational and yet the saddest construction, to put upon the matter, is that he, through remorse, put an end to his life."

"A very sad affair, Colonel Custis, I must admit," and with this remark from Mr. Hodgkiss, the conversation relating to this depressing subject dropped out.

I was somewhat attentive to the relating of the story told by the Colonel and had not noticed the exit of Mrs. Hodgkiss and Miss Gorham, who after a while came back, the former taking her accustomed seat and the latter, going to the window that looked out upon the bay.

I supposed it was some family matter, that required their attention outside the parlor, that had caused them to retire.

The incident past, I relieved myself of future embarrassment by taking my hat and going out to the stable to order the buggy that was to take me to the station.

At last the hour had arrived, the carriage was at the door and I went back into the house to bid good-bye to all.

Miss Gorham having again left the parlor, I sought her in the dining-room and while she kissed me through her tears, I took a fond adieu, scarcely able to get away from her embraces. Then repairing to the kitchen I parted with Mammy Sally and afterward, went to the parlor to perform the hardest task of all.

Must I offer my hand to Julia? Would she take it or not?

Would she show one sign of forgiveness for my bad conduct? Would she give me just one look of sympathy? Or must I ignore her altogether?

These and a thousand other perplexing questions rushed through my tantalized brain; while the effort to govern my own feelings, caused me to bite my lips, until the blood was ready to stain them and I had to staunch it with my handkerchief.

I shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Hodgkiss and Colonel Custis and then faced Anna and Julia.

As I took the hand of the former, the latter suddenly arose and crossing the floor, stood gazing out the front window.

Anna detained me with some trivial but pleasant remarks, perhaps to draw my attention from Julia.

The others had, after rising to bid me good-bye, advanced to the porch, to see me off. I turned from Anna to Julia. Her back was towards me; I advanced a step or two—far enough to let her know I was waiting.



She was toying with her fingers on the window pane.

For a moment I gazed at her, I could see the color rise and fall on her right cheek, for that was nearest me.

I imagined I saw her tremble.

As if to attract her attention, Anna called her.

"Julia."

A momentary start was all, except that she half turned her face and then looked out at the bay again.

I said: "Good-bye, Miss Custis." As she did not reply I passed quickly out and sprang into the buggy. I turned in my seat and cast at her a look of defiance, for I was hurt.

As I did so, she dropped her eyes and turned away from the window. Then the crack of the driver's whip and the grating of the carriage wheels on the gravel driveway, were all the sounds I heard. The unreadable face at the window, like that sometimes impressed by the lightning's flash was all I saw, and that is there to-day, as fresh and vivid as on that autumn morning I set off for Cambridge.

## CHAPTER XVI

A FEW days before I left home, Miss Gorham asked under what name I preferred to matriculate.

I told her I was willing to submit to any suggestion she might make.

I had never heard my mammy called by any other appellation than "Sally" and sometimes by way of euphuism, "Aunt Sally," many persons whose good breeding and intelligence may not be disputed, holding the idea that to prefix Miss, Mr., or Mrs., to the given or sir-name of a person of color, is an affectation as well as an unthought condescension on the part of the speaker, while, it may be added, colored persons not infrequently make themselves ridiculous by the too strict observance of the opposite rule.

As for Mammy Sally she would sometimes call herself Sally Jones, at other times Sally Lee and at others Sally somebody else; she having had several masters in her youth, the custom in the South being for servants to take the patronymic of their masters or mistresses.

As it might be affirmed with much apparent truth, that I was brought up under Colonel Custis; therefore Miss Gorham submitted two names, either of which I might choose with perfect satisfaction to

her, to wit: Either Jack Gorham or Jack Custis, and as I had often been called by the latter and never by the former name; I choose the latter and from that day to this have written my autograph "John Custis." When written by others outside the family it was: "John Custis, colored."

So by that name, John Custis, I was known at college; and as there was nothing in my appearance to betray my ancestry, I carefully abstained (in the parlance of the times) from giving myself away. It was thus that I entered on my new career, a role not difficult to play among strangers, but one that I knew would lead me into trouble at home—the place of all others where I desired to shine for the sake of her, I might never approach, be my name ever so illustrious, or my character ever so good. But there is some satisfaction, be it egotistical or otherwise, in affecting and cultivating a fine physique and training my mind to noble aspirations and storing my brain with useful knowledge. These accomplishments I courted assiduously and sought more strenuously, under the influence and example of a chance acquaintance of whom I shall presently speak.

It was he who showed me the transcendent glory of American Citizenship; the true manhood of American democracy. But to proceed.

At the end of my first session at Harvard, my kind patron sent me a draft in a sum sufficient to defray my expenses during vacation, advising me to remain North another year, saying that she knew I

should find a more congenial social atmosphere there than at home and although she was anxious to see me, she was nevertheless willing to sacrifice her own feelings for my welfare.

Of course this was disappointing. I had set much store on the anticipation of going South, where if danger did threaten and foes did lie in wait, there were compensating motives which, however, vague and imaginary they might be, were satisfying to my self-esteem and stimulating to that Quixotic spirit of revenge which, love declined, ever holds against the spurner of one's affection.

To go back to Virginia with the sun-tan removed, a student-face and the air of college life; to pass *her* on the road and meet *her* occasionally at our house and look *her* into anger or submission, were pleasures not to be lightly esteemed, by an empty-headed and vain fellow like me.

But I had to give it all up and bide my time.

I was meanwhile, not wholly ignorant of what was going on at home. Joe Watkins kept me posted, in his homely fashion, of most that was transpiring there, and Anna dropped me a note now and then, while my dear Miss Gorham was unremitting in her correspondence, keeping me supplied with pocket change and all the necessities that I required.

I spent most of my vacation at Nahant after which I went back to my studies with renewed vigor, nothing of any great importance happening until the commencement of my second term.

At that time there happened to be a reunion of the



alumni of the famous old school and I had the pleasure of meeting many men of learning and national importance.

It was during one of those days, that the students of my class were having a match game of ball, on our practicing grounds, in which I played, more by chance than superior ability, extremely well.

We had been playing a losing game, against hard luck and by reference to the score, there seemed but little probability of counting out; but by dint of good batting and clever maneuvering in the outer field, in which as I have hinted, I took a prominent part, we at last wrung victory from the grasp of defeat and won the contest.

There were many onlookers and among them, not a few of the former graduates of the college and from these we received a due amount of grateful applause.

When the game was over and we were about to quit the field, I saw coming towards me a man whose face I knew I had seen before.

It was, by the way, a face that once seen could never be forgotten.

Under a slouch hat was the same rugged brow, the same bullet-like head with hair closely clipped, apparently the same glasses, shading the same scrutinizing grey eyes, the same pugnacious nose, thick stubby mustache, grinning teeth, forceful chin, and bovine neck that had struck me so forcibly on a former occasion.

I knew not where nor when.

He came walking with a swinging gait, his muscular arms swaying in unison, with a vigorous and lengthy stride.

I saw he was going to intercept me and halting, I confronted him face to face. When within about a rod of me, he stopped, adjusted his eye glasses, squinted and exclaimed:

"Jack Sally, or the Devil's a Dutchman!"

Then rushing forward he held out his hand saying as he did so:

"Am I not correct?"

Instantly I remembered all about it.

"No," said I laughing "You have made no mistake. I'm the same fellow."

"You whipped him, didn't you?"

"I suppose I did," I replied. "At all events he quit the field. But I shall always think he had the better of me."

"No matter, no matter, you must always be like Paul Jones; never know when you're licked. If the Confederates had known they were defeated at Bull Run and Stonewall Jackson had had the sense to run away, the civil war would not have lasted as long as it did. What're doing here? Where did you come from? Where've you been all this time? What class're in?" and a dozen other interrogations he poured out at me like a Gatling gun belching forth a storm of grape shot.

I assured him my history was so strange and so eventful, that it would take me too long to go over it and must be left to a more convenient season.

"But your name—I think I never got it right. I caught something that day from the boys. But you didn't tell me and from what I can remember of the fight, you were frightened too badly to have told me if I had asked you" and he laughed merrily.

"They also called you a 'nigger,'" he went on, "but you don't look any more like a colored person than you did; and I'm sure you're not. But that doesn't matter so you're a man, and color doesn't make manhood. I've often thought of it and was always sure there was some mistake about it."

To stand up and tell a downright falsehood in the presence of such a man was stultification to begin with, had I possessed the brazenness to attempt it, so with a bit of confusion, I told him he had arrived at an erroneous suspicion; that my name at that time was Jack and that I was known to my companions as Aunt Sally's Jack, my mother being a negress whose name was Sally.

I saw he was completely taken aback.

He looked me over, up and down and seemed intensely puzzled.

"You say at that time, young fellow—pardon me, but what do you mean by that? Pray, do not consider me too inquisitive; but I'm very much interested in you."

"I'm known now, sir," I replied feeling a little nettled, "as Mr. John Custis, of Virginia."

"By all the blessed saints in Heaven, young man, you're a whole bundle of mystifications. One day you are Aunt Sally's Jack, a negro boy in New

Haven, Connecticut, and the next, a fine specimen of a gentleman from the Mother of Statesmen, flourishing a name conspicuous for its historical prestige; at one time a good-for-nothing insignificant little negro, kicked about by an overgrown 'Irish bloke,' as your friends called him, and at another time, an aristocratic scion of the F. F. Vs., of Virginia. Such a thing is incredible, sir. I must know more about you, I must. I shall grow crazy if I can't unravel such a concatenation of absurdities.

"Don't think I'm rude sir, I'm only curious to know you, to offer my friendship. Will you come to my hotel to-night and give me your confidence? My name is Theodore Roosevelt."



## CHAPTER XVII

"WHAT it is to be an American Citizen." That is the lesson I learned at the memorable interview, to which I was invited the evening after the ball game.

To the young and frivolous reader, this chapter, as it treats of social and semi-political problems, at that time so important to me, may not be as interesting as to older men and women, who peruse books for ideas, more than to while away a dull hour, but as it is part of my life's history and in its bearing, marks an epoch from which I had a new departure, I can not with justice to myself withhold it.

However, I will condense it as much as possible.

In all my life I had never had a confidant—one to whom I could implicitly trust the secrets of my life, or draw out that sympathy and advice I so often needed. And this is the worst feature of social ostracism.

I could confide in Joe Watkins, as to all I saw fit to disclose to him, but Joe enjoying the privileges of a higher station in society and amenable to the usages thereof, was an unwilling listener to the tale of my woes.

He knew what I had to contend against and ever was ready to warn me of approaching danger; but

being powerless to assist me farther than that, was better pleased at seeing me contented and happy, than of taking any responsibility upon himself to make me so.

But here was a friend indeed.

This earnest, strenuous gentleman of robust body, energetic intellect and sympathetic heart, had met me a poor young man, evidently born of the humblest of women and as evidently, out of wedlock, and had taken me to his bosom. It mattered little to him, when and where I was born or under what circumstances, so I had a clean body and a pure soul; so I was a man or had the makings of a man within me. I, or any other individual so endowed, might claim him as his defender. This I had proven on a former occasion and this he gave me to understand at the beginning of the appointed interview.

The reader can readily appreciate the gratitude with which I went about the welcome task of disclosing to him the secrets of my life, not concealing that most sacred one of all—that unrequited flame I had watched with ceaseless vigils, until my heart was nearly consumed by it.

And then he spoke severely but kindly, walking the floor backwards and forwards, gesticulating forcibly, chopping off his words, as a butcher chops off links of sausage, with his cleaver; and with such volubility that I found it quite difficult to keep pace with him.

He said my case was unique; that although my birth seemed at first sight to be unfortunate, I

yet had much to be thankful for, in the kind friends that were taking care of me.

He told me I must not take so pessimistic a view of life as I had been taking, quoting Milton:

"Accuse not Nature; she hath done her work;  
Do thou but thine."

Then he went on to say that facts were hard things to buck up against. That right is a correlative term, depending upon the mutability of events, while truth is an abstract and never varying principle; comparing the former to the mariner's compass, which varies in certain latitudes and certain conditions, and the latter to the polar star, declaring that in pursuing the truth we must not be oblivious to our surroundings. Then standing in front of me often gesticulating with his clenched fist, he went on:

"In your case the facts are against your position.

"According to your own account of yourself, you were born of an inferior race, in poverty and disgrace. It is not your fault that you thus came into the world," he said, "but your misfortune. But as you found the world, so you must live in it, making the most of the talent God has endowed you with." Remarking "If you are to rise at all, it must be *in* not *out* of your station.

"Remember the old distich," he said:

'Honor and fame from no condition rise,  
Act well your part; there all the honor lies.'

adding: "We can't all be heroes, but we can all be true to ourselves.

"Ahead of us all is either a noble or ignoble career, no matter the sphere in which we move; and to accomplish anything we must have faith in ourselves. It is better to be a good negro than a poor white man. We must have faith in ourselves."

Then he spoke of Cesar and the boatman and the confidence which David had in the strength of his arm and the trueness of his aim when he slew the Philistine giant in the valley of Elah.

"But," and now he hit me hard, "you must fight in the ranks of your own company and under the strictest discipline. Your kind benefactress is educating you. You are in despair as to how you may best employ yourself after you shall have left college. The way is plain; the field is fallow. Thousands of poor illiterate men and women of your class in the South need moral as well as manual training. They must be uplifted. There is no other way by which the colored man can be raised out of his misery.

"You already know how to work with your hands. You are here to learn with your head and your heart. Go teach your brethren. Go, save them from poverty and indigence, from the jails and from the stake."

Then he spoke of politics, deprecating the policy of class legislation and dwelling upon the ill-advised methods of our legislators in dragging the negro question into the arena of political debate and sectional strife in the days of 1820 and later still when the uncompromising battle between the extension



of slavery and its opponents waxed hotter and hotter until the misguided adherents of the abominable system were defeated and the country from thenceforth leaped into a gigantic prosperity because by setting the negro free it had wiped out the blot of its own stultification.

Then he paid a glowing tribute to labor:

"Do you, sir, call honorable toil menial? Sir, there is no such thing. To labor is a God-given privilege. It is more than that. It is mandatory from the very beginning of creation."

And here he grew decidedly vehement.

"Why does the paralytic shrink; his limbs become flaccid and uncomely, his face wrinkled and his gait become that of a crab as he drags himself painfully along?

"He has no wasting disease, no loss of blood and often no derangement of the stomach. It is because the brain can no longer whip the muscles into action and without action the body dies.

"Labor holds in her broad palm, health, wealth and beauty and all the graces attend her train. She builds our cities, our railroads, our ships; and she stood by the Nile when the pyramids were rising from Egypt's sands.

"You have a destiny, as well as I, but you must not seek it in forbidden paths, nor pursue it by devious routes.

"The tidal wave that rushes headlong against the rock is broken into seething foam and falls in futile roar at its base. But when it seeks the wide-open

mouth of the river-bed it glides in serenely, singing joyously on its way. Planets move in their own orbits, hence they do not collide.

"If God has marked out for you a road, walk in it with a firm stride and head erect. It will lead you to success and happiness.

"It is all right to aim high, but if you desire to reach the mountain top you'll never get there by star-gazing at its snow-clad summit. You must ascend by single strides, and, as Dante says, 'the hinder foot the firmer.'

"The glory of American citizenship is the privilege to work and to enjoy the fruits thereof.

"As to your foolish, sentimental love affair, I pity you." This he said with a sneer.

"It is so stupidly morbid, that it stamps you almost as an imbecile.

"Drop it, I say! Drop it at once and for all! Drop it as you would a hot potato, a venomous reptile! There are no such romances in this country. No stooping of lords and ladies to peasants; nor subjects aspiring to the hands of princesses. There are no princes nor peasants here.

"There are no lords and ladies here. There are no subjects. Every pure woman is a lady and every true American citizen is a prince. Seek a wife from among your own class. For a woman who cannot look up to you is bound to look down on you and one ounce of respect between married people is worth a ton of mawkish sentimentality.

"Neither blood nor color, nor station makes the

man in this country, thank God! It is honor, truth, action. It is obedience to law and patient but strenuous industry. This is the boon of American citizenship.

"Plodding along this road you will make friends of the strong and escape the toils of the wicked; for God will be with you and there is in this country, or there ought to be, enough of justice left to protect you, and not only you but every other man who calls the starry flag his own.

"Do this and teach your people, many of whom for want of better leaders than they have had have unwisely gone astray, to do likewise. In that direction lies, I believe, your true mission.

"Meanwhile, Mr. Custis, let me assure you, you have my best wishes, and when you meet me never think of your color or station but of your manhood which no man can deprive you of.

"I live in New York. When passing through the city to and from Cambridge, don't forget to call on me. You shall always be welcome."

This is a random account of some of the things he said; but the bare words but poorly convey their true force and eloquent delivery.

I winced under the sledge hammer blows he dealt me, but I knew they were salutary and I made up my mind to follow his advice so far as I was able by readjusting my plans for the future and trampling under foot the old dragon that had so long menaced me, which I saw I must conquer or die. Would he get the better of me again, when I got

back to Virginia? That was the all-important question.

My host saw me to the door, firmly grasping my hand and bade me good-night. Little did I think then that in a few brief years I should follow him through the jungles of Las Guasimas and there bedew with my blood the pretty wild flowers of Cuba Libre.



## CHAPTER XVIII

THE change wrought in my mind by the kind advice of my new friend was so great that I felt like a different person altogether and I returned to my college duties with higher aims, if not loftier ambitions, mapping out for myself a career of self-denial and a life-time devotion to the amelioration and uplifting of my degraded race.

My methods in the prosecution of such a work were of course unformed, but I lacked no desire to carry out my laudable intentions when the time should arrive for me to put them into practice, whatever they might be.

I realized how foolish I had been and how much trouble I had allowed myself to see by nursing a fruitless passion so long, and worrying my very soul out of me as to my future, when there lay before me such splendid opportunities for doing good; and being thus stimulated by these exalted ideas, I made rapid progress, standing at the head of my class and winning the respect of all with whom I was associated.

And thus I worked on, trying to forget the past and trying harder to banish from my heart all thought of her who had, as if by fate, come into my boyhood life, God knows how or why in such a

strange and forbidden manner, and to use the words of my friend: "to drop the venomous reptile," but alas whenever I looked within it was still there, quiet it might be for a moment, but ever ready to spring into motion again.

At last came the end of my second year and I turned my face toward home. Passing through New York, I remembered my friend's kind invitation and tarried with him a day and a night.

I found him at Sagamore, his country home on Long Island, where he entertained me with much hospitality.

We talked much of the time I spent with him on various topics, especially of the imminent prospect of a war with Spain in behalf of Cuban independence, during which he asked me if war should come and he raised a regiment, if I would go with him? To which proposition I very readily assented, saying I would only be too happy to do so.

Just as I was about to leave he looked at me quizzically through his glasses and showing his teeth from one incisor to the other, jocularly asked:

"Well how about that serpent, have you succeeded in dropping it?"

I told him I feared I had not, entirely.

"The trouble" I said, "was that the serpent had me and it was hard to get away from his ophidian grip."

"Tut, tut," he exclaimed, "to the winds with such argument. You'll never be a man until you can better control yourself."

"Now, see here, before you leave me, promise me on the honor of a gentleman that you will never by look, word or deed, convey to Miss Custis the least suggestion that you have for her any other than the most respectful regard, such as a young person of your station should have.

"I will not have anything else to do with you, unless you do."

I do not think he was angry, but he was very much in earnest.

I reflected a moment and then replied:

"I swear, sir, I never will until the day of my death."

"That's a good fellow. May God bless you." And with the same strenuous grasp of my hand he bade me good-day, pressing me to call again on my way back.

I had forsworn myself, but I did it easily and candidly. Nor did I do this for fear of punishment, but simply because I had never thought, up to that time, of insulting her by such outrageous behavior. How at last I became desperate and how near I came to breaking my oath is yet to be divulged.

I suppose I must have struck my acquaintances with surprise on my arrival in the "Neck" by the improvement that my sojourn at college had made in me in every conceivable manner.

I was taller, paler, and of course more intellectual-looking, while my manners must have been those of a polished gentleman of good society; for everybody treated me with more deference, while

my generous friend, Miss Gorham, appeared delighted at the change, as well as gratified at the success of her undertaking.

I found them all well after my absence of two years and the same humdrum round of commonplace events that were transpiring when I left. Joe and Anna, warming up, perhaps, in their game of flirtation. Mr. Hodgkiss still borrowing money from the Colonel, only to throw it away on theoretic husbandry. The Colonel himself pressing his long drawn-out suit with Miss Gorham and she and her mother as far from being reconciled to each other's idea of right and wrong as usual; all of which was of small moment to me, except that which affected the happiness of my dear lady, and that, caused me not a little solicitude.

The evening after my arrival Colonel Custis came over accompanied by Julia. His hearty greeting had no reservation behind it. He complimented me on my good looks and questioned me about my studies, being astonished at my rapid progress.

Julia, who in that short period had grown to be a most lovely girl, came in swinging her light hat by the strings and nonchalantly saying:

"Hello, Jack," took a seat with Anna on the porch. I returned her salutation politely, but frigidly.

In a little while we all repaired to the same place. It was early Summer and the frogs were croaking in the woods and the fire-flies flitting here and there under the trees which stood in the yard, full-fledged in their new foliage.



The stars were hidden by a hazy atmosphere. The odor of roses was abroad and the whole scene enervating to the physical senses, but stimulating to the soul and reminiscent of all that is felt and known in the rapturous realization of love's young dream.

Fresh from the bustle and activity of the busy North where Cupid carries his bow in one hand and his check-book in the other; his quiver at his back and a pen over his ear, thus mingling business with pleasure, as I once knew a courting policeman who never failed to take his unsightly "locust" along with him when he went to call on his lady love, to the lassitude of this Southern clime, where the days are made for siestas and the nights for trysts, was a transition too overwhelming to be resisted, and I soon began to feel the warm blood sending its genial glow through and through me and every time I looked at Julia's face and every time she spoke, my heart beat quicker still, until I was soon again the same poor fond fool as of yore, while the words of my good friend, "drop it, drop it," were hammering away on my brain like the woodman's ax as he stands at a distance across the valley, where the air is dense, and strikes vigorously at the tree as with a muffled implement and we see the blow but hear not the sound.

There was a vivid recollection of the words but they made no impression on me now. I was drunk with love and romance, and could no more resist their influence, than the water, out there in the bay just in front of the house, could resist the attraction of the rising moon.

Alas, that second day of my home-coming, was a fatal one for me!

It shattered into fragments all my good resolutions and put to rout all the precepts and all the logic of my philosophical adviser. I was back again in the old rut and knew that my only salvation was to get away again as soon as possible to college or somewhere else. To remain near Julia and not be able to tell her I loved her would only be to go mad.

As we sat out there on the porch we talked of various matters, the Colonel often directing his conversation to me; and Julia, while she was careful not to address her remarks to me, joined the general confabulation.

When the evening was far advanced our callers got ready to depart. The Colonel requested some of us to accompany them a short way and Anna and I did so, the Colonel and I walking in front, followed by Anna and Julia. I was surprised when we separated with them that he should invite me to call, saying he wanted to talk with me about Plutarch's men and rub up on the classics. I told him I would be glad to do so—poor foolish moth that I was, to be drawn within the radius of the flame toward which if I approached too near, I was bound to scorch my wings, if not to consume my very soul.

The next day I paid a visit to Uncle Kiah intending to play a ruse on him. So I put on the brusque manner of a stranger and entered the hut.

I was shocked at the great change a couple of years had wrought in his appearance old age having seemed to come upon him with a tiger's leap since I last saw him and I felt that when I again left him to go North, it would be forever.

His helpless senility appealed to me strongly and I almost shrank from imposing upon him; but I knew when it was all over he would relish the joke, for in his day he had been a great old teaser himself.

I found him sitting under the window trying as usual to flag a chair.

I stood a while watching him. I saw he was very blind, depending in his work more on the sense of touch than eyesight.

I cleared my throat merely to appraise him of my presence.

Stiffly he raised his head and discovering me said:

"Sarvant, marster, will you take er seat?"

I told him in my disguised voice I would.

Then laying down his rushes, he began the following conversation:

"I think you is er stranger in dese parts. Least-wise, I take ye fer one. May I ax whar yer came from?"

I told him from the North.

"From de Noth, eh? From de Noth. Well, well, I mought er knowd dat from yer speech an' from yer cloves as well, if I hadn't been so nigh-sighted. I clar-ter Gawd mistah I'se so ole I can't scarcely tell de day from night. It's mighty bad to be ole an' blind."

"But you've been younger, old man, and seen your day," I suggested.

"Yes, Honey, dat I have. I used ter could see equalized t'an owl, night er day.

"I could see er 'possum, sir, up de tallest pine in de woods. I could see, sir, de eyes ob de man in de moon, sir, I could, an' I could tell de color of'm too.

"Now den I can jest 'sarn dat," holding up his hand before his face.

"I spose it's de work of de Good Lord er gittin' me used ter de long sleep of deff. From the Noth, eh?"

"Look er here, mistah, I want ter know ef you eber see Jack up dat er way, sir?"

"Who is Jack?" I inquired. "A friend of yours I suppose?"

"Why, sir, yer must be mighty ignerent ef yer don't know Jack."

I told him there were a great many people living in the North and among them a great many Jacks.

"Which of them do you mean, Uncle?"

"Why *our* Jack. Hain't yer hern ob'm?"

"He's er far sample ob de new nigger. De fore-runner ob de new creation. Fust I didnt 'blieve in'm. Now I is er converted man. De doctern is, dat de cullerd race is gwine ter be changed. As sho as you set dar, sir, gwine ter be changed. Dat boy come down here, odder wise war fetched down here by his mammy—ar nigger not altogedder er black nigger but er sort ob mulelatter. But er nig-



ger, sir, 'thout doubt. Some ob de white folks took'm up an' sunt'm away ter git book larin' an' I'll agree to eat my haid ef dat fellow haint turned white. White as you is, sir. Sho's you born, he hab. An' de time is sho comin' when you can no more tell ar nigger from ar white man than er gray goose from er gray gander arter matin' time." Then with a sigh, "De onest thing I'm greebin' 'bout is dat I'se got'er go 'fore my time comes ter 'ceive de new birf. But dat boy's bound ter be persecuted here. De white folks not ready for dat change yit. Dey say he neber can pass fer er white man here an' he better neber tempt it. Ole Mistah Watkins—huh, huh, huh,—ah!" shaking his head. "Ole Mistah Watkins! Well!" Then after a pause:

"Yes, sir, dat's de boy I mean."

"Then you know him, do you?" I asked.

"Know'm! Didn't I fotch'm up? Didn't I larn'm how ter ketch 'possums?"

"Speaking of 'possums," I interrupted him, "Do you ever get hold of any now-a-days? You're too old to hunt."

"Nary one," he replied dejectedly, his hands resting on his knees. "I tell you Gawd's truf, Mistah, I neber gits er taste ob'm anymore. But I hones arter it mighty."

"One day las' summer I war er settin' dar by de do half er sleep an' half er wake when what should come er long but an' ole she'un wid er dozen or more young uns. Some er ridin' on her back, some on her tail an' some in her false belly. De haid

sight I eber seen! I grab up mer cane and starts arter'm, an' I follers em clean down inter de swamp. But shay! What's de use ob er ole man like me tryin' ter do anything. She jes take all dem little uns inter her false belly and turn 'round an' grin at me an' inter de briars she went an' dat were de las' ob'er.

"Huh, huh! I done got fas' in dem briars an' fore Gawd I'd er died dar ef one ob de Kunnell's han's hadn't a hearn me and pulled me out.

"So, so, mistah, how're ye off fer er chaw ob terbacker?"

I had not forgotten the old fellow's weakness and going forward I put a pound of the "weed" into his hand.

"What you call dis, mistah?" he inquired, weighing it up and down.

"That's tobacco," I replied. "Try it."

He unrolled it carefully, taking out the broad flat plugs and laying them one by one on his knee. "Fore de Lord, mistah, I haint seen sich er sight fer forty year."

Then he tried to bite off a piece, but failing for want of teeth, he took up his knife and cutting a chew, put it into his mouth and began to munch upon it, much after the fashion of a cow chewing a wisp of hay.

"Cabindish! Reel ole Cabindish! Yer gwine ter gib me all dis?" he asked in astonishment, looking up into my face. I did not have time to reply. The sunlight of joy overspread his countenance, his dim eyes fairly sparkled as he exclaimed:

"You rascal, Jack! I might er known nobody else'd sarve me dat way. Gawd bless you!" and as the ponderous brass spectacles fell from his nose the tears started in his eyes.

"I'se seen de glory ob de Lord in de lan' ob de libin'. Praise Gawd! Praise Gawd!" he burst forth hustling to his feet and embracing me.

"An' you is well—'taint no use er axin' you. An' you is white, isn't you? An' dat's what I allus 'low'd, dat it was bad business in de Yankees ter free de niggers 'thout makin'm white, little think-in den dey was gwine ter do it. Fer when Gawd took er way de serpent's legs in de Gayrden ob Edom, he didnt lef'm 'thout feet, but gin'm plenty ter git er way wid.

"De mostest cruelest thing dat was eber done in all dis worl' was ter take us er way from our mars-ters 'thout lan', 'thout houses, 'thout cloves, 'thout bread ter eat and then, and then tell us 'ter root!' But whar we gwine ter root? Cut er hog's nose off and den tell'm ter root!

"Ole mistah eel, he say: 'dis fryin' pan bery hot. Can't stand it.' Den he jump outen de fryin' pan in-ter de fire an' he fin' dat hotter dan de fryin' pan. I say dat all onjest. I knew'd it was onjest. Dar war but one thing to do and dat was ter made de nigger white an' dat hab at las' come ter pass.

"Glory be ter Gawd in de highest!"

## CHAPTER XIX

ON my way home that afternoon, just after sunset I met Mr. Watkins. He was riding his pumiced-footed horse. I tried to evade him but found it impossible.

As he came along, I tipped my hat to him and was hurrying on when he pulled up, swung his horse's head around and bawled out at me:

"I'll be damned ter blast, if I ain't tired of seeing you walking about here all dressed up and doing nothing. Everybody else has ter work for a living and you shall do it too. Let me tell you, young man, there's no room for such as you in this neighborhood. The best thing for you to do is to get back to the place you came from. Do you hear?"

I did; but I did not reply. I turned and quietly pursued my way and he did the same thing muttering:

"Damned ter blast, if I don't get even with you yet."

But before reaching home I was destined to see another sight that stung me far more deeply and that was Mr. Sharpe walking with Julia toward the Custis mansion!

I met them pat, the latter recognizing me indifferently. Sharpe passed without noticing me.



Was it possible she was going to marry him?

I knew he was not Colonel Custis' choice, and this was the first time in my life I had ever seen the young lady so honor him; but my jealousy was aroused and I grit my teeth. It was a bitter pill, but I had to swallow it. What more could I do?

I reached home mad with myself and the rest of mankind and went to bed that night as pessimistic as a jealous fool could possibly be.

One thing I had realized in the short time since my arrival, and that was the fact that my adoption into the Hodgkiss family had caused my dear friends to be ostracised by every other person in the "Neck" except Colonel Custis' folks. This condition of things was bad enough when I left, but was, if possible, ten times worse now.

The very ground they lived upon was tabooed. Not a visitor other than those I have mentioned ever called. When they went to church nobody spoke to them. All manner of insulting remarks were made about them, and slanderous reports were freely circulated about Miss Gorham and the Colonel, as well as about her and me. I felt ashamed of myself that I should be the cause of so much injury to innocent people, and thought it my duty, now, to relieve them from further trouble and insult on my account. This I mentioned to Miss Gorham the next morning, but she would not hear to it, saying what other people thought of her was of no consequence whatever when she was doing what she thought was right, and that the other

members of the family were no society people, anyway, and if others would only attend to their own affairs and leave her and her friends alone, they would have enough to bother their minds about without going into high strikes over the conduct of their neighbors. So I thought if she was satisfied, it was no part of mine to grumble, and I became more reconciled.

With nothing else to do I spent most of my vacation fishing; visiting Uncle Kiah; walking through the woods and fields, recalling what to me now were fond memories of by-gone days, and sometimes at evening sitting on the porch with Colonel Custis at his home discussing the merits of Virgil, Homer and Milton. On these occasions I seldom saw Julia, and if I did see her accidentally, returned her salutation as stiffly and coldly as she dignified to offer hers.

How different was her conduct now to what it had been, when a ragged boy I used to receive my meals from her hands and enjoy all those innocent familiarities which childhood allows in the South between the two races, or at least once did in days of yore.

Alas! I thought, if that freedom of intercourse, that unstrained relation might only endure between them as grown-up people, and to this day what a better understanding might obtain and what mutual benefits might be exchanged.

I well remember how, one day in the harvest-field, when I was too faint to go to the house for

dinner, she had come out where I was lying in the shade of a loaded wagon, bringing me a "jug of cool switchel" and a bit of boiled chicken and some bread and cake, saying she had saved it for me, calling me "Jack", and sitting down on a sheaf of oats until I ate it.

Then, she had not learned the lesson of caste, the laws of conventionality, nor the necessity for the fig leaves of custom.

And later still, when kneeling by me on the beach, she had so delicately rewarded me for doing her bidding and performing what she considered a noble deed! She was a child then and I—a servant.

Now all was changed. We were far apart and a wall had been erected between us which she had no desire to demolish and I no power to scale—a wall that even death, who breaks down every other known barrier, has not the power to level—the wall of Caste.

What bunches of daisies I used to collect for her, and now if I should hand her a single sprig of myrtle, she would scorn it. How many times I had held her tightly in my arms from boat to shore and from shore to boat and wished the few yards were as many miles; and now, should I touch but her hand, she would consider herself defiled!

Ah, my strenuous friend, how true thy words! Right is a correlative term; but Truth—and then I might here add—and Love are eternal!

I was walking leisurely home one evening from Colonel Custis' house, where I had been at his

request to work out a problem in analytical geometry—he being very fond of mathematics—which he had forgotten how to solve. It was a few days before my return to Harvard. Coincidentally I met Miss Gorham, who had sauntered out alone to meet me, so eager was she to be with me every hour before I should start away again on another two years of absence.

Between our house and that of Colonel Custis was a grove of stately pines interspersed with myrtle bushes and other shrubbery and festooned with wild grape vines with now and then a holly-tree with emerald leaves and scarlet berries growing among them.

It was known as the "Trysting Place," and had been from time immemorial a resort of picnickers and the more sacred haunt of lovers, the whispering of the trees and the swish of the waves along the bay shore, just in the rear, blending so harmoniously with the vibrations of love-strung souls.

When we reached this spot Miss Gorham remarked that as supper would not be ready for an hour, we would stop for a while to watch the setting sun and enjoy the on-creeping twilight.

"Just here on the outside," she suggested, "not far into the grove, for I had a dream about this very place shortly after we came to Virginia, and have ever since been bothered by a presentiment that some time in both our lives, you and I will signalize this very park as the place where, either for good or bad, I can not tell which, we shall take



a new departure in the voyage of life. If it ever does come to pass, I hope and trust it may be for the better; although I should be perfectly happy *now*, Jack (and I think it would then be in my power to make you so), if Mr. Hodgkiss was only out of debt. It is too bad! Too bad!"

Then she, sighing, changed the subject, and after we had adjusted ourselves into seats of long grape vines that hung from the tops of the tall pines, looped near the ground and twining about the trunks of other trees, she again began to converse, asking me if I had been calling on Colonel Custis, saying what a good man he was and how kind it was of him to make so much of me.

"And Julia," she added, "is such a sweet girl, and as fair as she is sweet," and as she went on painting the form and character of the girl in gorgeous colors, my face burned as if on fire and my heart-beats were like the blows of a sledge-hammer. I was bordering on a state of phrensy, but managed to ask her if she thought Julia would marry Sharpe.

"Why no," she replied, scrutinizing my face. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because, because," I stammered, "he goes there very often."

"That amounts to nothing," she said carelessly. "That's of no consequence."

"Then why does she walk with him? I have seen them walking along this very wood together at sunset," I expostulated.

"Ah, my dear boy, that amounts to nothing; they-

were likely settling some quarrel or other. But who constituted you their *espion*, Jack? Was it the fair Julia that attracted your attention, or the man, your arch-enemy?" She smiled, looking at me out of the corner of her eye. I must have displayed great embarrassment, for I did not want her to know my secret, and now I was almost sure she did.

She relieved me gratefully, however, when she supplemented her interrogations with:

"Don't be afraid of any collusion on her part against you. She is a good friend of yours whatever her relations with Mr. Sharpe may be, and I am free to say I think they are far from reciprocal. She will never do anything to injure you. Of this I am positively certain."

"But she treats me very coldly," I said with as little feeling as I could command. "Almost contemptuously."

"You only imagine that, Jack. You must not be supersensitive. She's a young lady now, you must not forget, and you're a young man."

"And beneath her; yes, and more than that," I said, in a tone of bitterness that seemed to touch my benefactress to the core. For as we sat *vis-a-vis* she came across to me, and, putting her arms about my neck, pressing back my straw hat by the compact of her bosom, kissed my hair and saying with emotion:

"Poor Jack, poor fellow! If Mr. Hodgkiss were only out of debt!"

Then after she had let me go, she walked backwards and forwards assuming a reflective mood, saying to herself:

"Two more years will decide it. It will soon pass away," while I sat and looked at her, wondering what she meant. Then she grew reminiscent and began to speak of New England, its green hills and flowery dales and her happy girlhood. "Ah! life is so strange," she said.

"You know, Jack, I'm not Mr. Hodgkiss' daughter. My mother has been twice married. You know that, don't you, Jack?" I told her yes.

"My father died under untoward circumstances, that cast a dark cloud over us all (meaning her family), and especially over me. By-and-by I will tell you all about it, when Mr. Hodgkiss gets out of debt. I was left my father's only heir, my brother having died only a few days prior to my father's death. He left quite some property, which fell to me, my mother taking a widow's part. Afterward she married my stepfather, Mr. Hodgkiss, and, confiding in his management, allowed him to use her money. Now it is all gone, and he owes as much more to Colonel Custis—so much, indeed, that should the Colonel ever make up his mind to press my step-father, the Hodgkiss family would be irretrievably ruined. That would kill my poor mother. So you see life and death hang on the generosity of one man—or, what is more uncertain still, the life of a single person. For should the Colonel suddenly die, the dreaded catastrophe would fall

upon our dear people. And I am sadly mixed up in all this trouble," she added deprecatingly.

"Oh, I understand," I said. "That's the cause of all the trouble between you and Mrs. Hodgkiss. Oh, yes, I begin to see through it."

"Yes, Jack, she wants me to marry Colonel Custis."

"But Colonel Custis is a good man," I ventured to say. "A very good man."

"Yes, Jack, a most generous, noble man," was her reply.

I dared go no farther, and Miss Gorham was silent, looking down at the ground, for she had again taken a seat. As she sat there in that pensive attitude, she looked, I thought, more womanly beautiful than I had ever seen her.

On the clean sleek needles that covered the ground as with a carpet, she was patting her foot, slipper-clad, arched of instep and shapely of form.

As I regarded her then I took her to be a woman of forty, more or less, possessing considerable *embonpoint*, slightly over the medium height, with a pure, pale face expressive of more sadness than buoyancy, its features clean cut and decidedly aristocratic. She was indeed a noble specimen of mature womanhood.

She was wearing her greyish hair *a la Pompadour* and was attired in a frock of soft, white material that well became her yet faultless outlines.

What a handsome woman she was then! What must she have been twenty years before!



This was the thought that occupied my mind as I sat there regarding her in silence while she seemed to ponder over some momentous theme unknown to me.

"It will all come out right," she said after a while. "It will all come out right." And then, as if in a state of abstraction, she nearly drove me mad by murmuring: "Yes, Julia is a lovely girl, pure as a snow-drop and sweet as a rose," and such-like, until I, furious with rage and forgetting myself and the presence of her who had made me what I was, dashed my hat to the ground and tossing my arms wildly over my head roared out: "Great God! what is all her sweetness and beauty to me who am accursed?" and staggering as a drunken man I fell at her feet, begging her for Heaven's sake not to drive me mad.

Then she sat down on the ground, and, taking my head in her lap, talked soothingly to me, saying: "Bear it a little longer, Jack. The end of your trials is near. Trust all your cares to me. I will see you through." And her soft voice and the warmth of her caressing hand drove away the demon within me, and I fell asleep while she was talking.

## CHAPTER XX

Two years more and I was home again, proud of my attainments and bearing about me the self-satisfying assurance of a splendid manhood. The public duties of my friend had stood in the way of my seeing him until on my way back to Virginia, when I casually met him in the streets of New York.

He approached me with the same robust friendliness, commending me for my good looks and candidly and sincerely pleased at my attainments, for I had won the honor of valedictorian at the late commencement, and graduated with other preferments in the literary department of the University.

Patting me on the back, he said:

"Go on, my brave fellow. The higher your attainments the more perfect will be your work among your people. A hundred or two of such men, engaged in the work that Booker Washington has started, would redeem the colored race from that condition of semi-barbarism into which a great number of them have relapsed since the war, having been, as they were, cut loose almost entirely from the influence of the better class, by proscriptive legislation and the abusive and degrading oppression of political demagogues. Surely they can be

reclaimed when the proper relations between them and the white race have been adjusted.

"They are citizens *de facto* already; they must be citizens *de jure*—made so by the refining influence of practical education and substantial thrift. This is imperative. Their ideas of citizenship must be enlarged, their notions of freedom corrected. In a word, they must be taught to wear their new character seemingly and not obtrusively, and learn to rise from the bottom to the top, not by the frantic leaps as of a frog trying to get out of a well, but by building like the coral insects a sure foundation, worthy the well-proportioned outlines of a symmetrical, social superstructure. That's the work that must be done by such as you."

Then he spoke of the coming struggle with Spain, saying he expected if war came to raise a regiment, wanting to know of me if I still desired to join it. I answered him in the affirmative and gleefully, for I longed to bury in some exciting employment or enterprise, the still reeking corpse of a dead love, if I may so speak of it, about which he fortunately failed to inquire, thinking, I suppose, I had forgotten all about it.

I was much solaced at finding matters at home in *status quo*, with two exceptions, both of which I was appraised of by letter before I left Cambridge.

One was that Mr. Hodgkiss' affairs were not improving, and the other the passing of Uncle Kiah.

The first affected me on Miss Gorham's account; for I remembered what she had said; the other on

my own, and never had anything so moved me before.

The postscript to Miss Gorham's letter bringing me the sad news of the old man's death had read:

"Uncle Kiah has departed this life and was laid to rest in the colored burying-ground among his kindred, the place where you and he buried 'Ruler.'"

"I know you will be sorry. Julia, bless her dear, little, kind heart, and I were with him at the last moment. We had been over every day to look after him and take him something to eat and thus happened to be there at the critical moment. His last words were: 'Tell Jack——' He never finished the sentence. May he rest in peace!"

Where he and I buried "Ruler!" Yes, I knew the spot—the bramble in the corn-field with the clashing, snapping blades of a growing crop all around, the morning glories creeping up the stalks, the wild roses in the bramble and the scent of unripe fodder in the air. The negro graveyard!

"Ruler" and Uncle Kiah sleeping together! The two old friends of my boyhood mingling their dust, where I, but for my dear Miss Gorham, would some day have doubtless mingled mine—in that negro graveyard!

But what more appropriate resting place would the old negro have chosen, had he been consulted, than to sleep in death with the brute whose kind he so dearly loved, and with the other *brutes*, the victims of the white man's sin?



What more than brute, some one might ask, was he?

What other qualities did he possess to win the favor of mankind but humility, obedience and the strength and will to toil and to suffer for others? for, as he had said in his own quaint dialect, he had fed many mouths.

What other qualities, I ask, could make a soul so pure, a heart so kind, a character so noble? Still what more Christ-like? Surely with these qualities and a black skin a man must be a brute! And this is the irony of slavery.

Dog and negro sleeping together! May their rest be as sweet as the dew-tipped grass; as the bud of the wild-rose.

May the soft and plastic clay bleach the slave's dark skin to pearly whiteness! And let him alone object to the sentiment who never knew the caresses of a dog, or the friendship of a negro; and may Br'er Rabbit and Mistah Opossum find it in the generosity of their hearts to forgive these, their erstwhile foes, now that they are no more, and come and sit by moonlight at their graves, as I, who cherish their memory, would even now repair thither to drop a tear where they repose.

But I had to turn away from these dead, but not unremunerative reflections, to meet the sterner duties of life, now fast encroaching upon the borderland of demarcation, where former things must pass away and all things become new. Had I been permitted to plan my own future, I should have quit

college and sought a field of work along the line suggested by my Northern friend; but although verging upon my majority, I could not forego yielding to the wishes of my more than female friend, Miss Gorham, who had planned that I should take a course of law at Columbia, in New York.

But how she was disappointed, and how I became a soldier instead of a lawyer, I will relate in a subsequent chapter.

For the time being I lived a sort of *dolce far niente* life during the summer (I can afford to come down to dates now) of 1897.

It is as easy to teach a dog new tricks as to push innovations upon a country community.

Four years had changed all things that grow and all that decay, but the habits, tastes and thoughts of the good people of the "Neck" were the same as when I first bade it adieu for that Alma Mater of so many of our great and good men. Dear old Harvard!

These were as perennial as the seasons, as unchanging as the heavens by which the ancients swore, or the sun, to which they paid their vows.

Lolling through the hot days of this Summer, the last I should thus spend, nursing the wounds of a bleeding heart and keeping close to home for more than one reason, I saw it go by in the same old fashion.

Beach parties were as much in vogue as ever, though I scarcely ever attended them; not because I was not invited, but Mr. Watkins and his two

lieutenants were invariably guests and I was averse to being thrown into their company.

One day, late in August, an expedition of this kind was arranged. Our folks were to go along, but when the time arrived Miss Gorham was indisposed, and, as we all refused to start without her, we excused ourselves and remained at home.

Having nothing better to do that morning, I sauntered down to the shore to see them off. Mr. Sharpe, as was his custom, took his seat in the Colonel's batteau, and his boon companion in that of Mr. Watkins. Just before they were about to shove off, Colonel Custis called to me, saying:

"Jack, don't you want to go?" Before I could answer him in the negative, I saw Julia touch his arm and shake her head.

"Fy, fy!" I overheard him say, "that's all foolishness!" If it was I she referred to, my reply must have relieved her, for I very politely refused the Colonel's kind request, nodding my head at the same time in defiance at the girl, who was ostensibly engaged in dabbling her hand in the water, as she leaned over the side of the boat, but really absorbed in casting furtive glances at me as I stood on the shore, looking daggers at her.

But what right had I to look, or think, or feel, when were I but to express in oral language a single thought that flashed across my mind, in spite of all that Colonel Custis might do individually, or as an officer of the law, a charred stake standing in the soft sand and a handful of brown ashes

whirled about by the morning gale, would be all that would be left of me.

It was a typical day for the season, and I remarked as they sailed away, the mass of snow white cumulous clouds banked up in the West—a grand argosy of freighted balloons only waiting for the command of Eolus to cast off their moorings in the afternoon, and floating eastward deluge the earth with rain.

I wondered Colonel Custis did not take cognizance of the condition of the weather, but he did not, seeming to be a little out of sorts any way. I supposed it was because Miss Gorham was not along.

I watched them sailing down the bay, six boats in the fleet, until they passed the gap in the meadows and entered the inlet, when I retraced my steps, brooding over the conduct of Miss Custis, who, I had the best of circumstantial evidence now to believe, did not want my company. I flew to the conclusion at once that she was my enemy, notwithstanding what Miss Gorham had said, and that she had joined forces with Messrs. Sharpe, Watkins and Company to crush me.

"Welcome the day," I said to myself, "when I can once more quit this accursed place! Welcome, war; and welcome, death. O, thou Man of the broad jaw, the lion-brow and the strenuous brain! How much better had it been for me had I only obeyed thy warning voice!"

Tortured by such reflections, I refused to take



dinner with the family, and, being in a satirical mood, I snatched up a copy of *Juvenal* and went up to my room to try to compose myself, sprawling out upon the bed with nothing on but my shirt and trousers.

## CHAPTER XXI

By the middle of the afternoon the air was almost suffocating, it was so hot. Once or twice the declining sun was hidden by clouds, out of which came some distant thunder, low and muttering; but they all passed either to the north or the south of us and lulled by the quiet which prevailed, unbroken save by the desultory rising and falling of the shrill notes of a beastly insect of the cicada tribe that had awakened from its seven years of slumber and crawled up a locust-tree by my window, I fell into a doze—the guilty face of a pretty girl under a broad-rimmed hat and a small plump hand playing in the water at the side of a boat still indelibly impressed on my too receptive brain.

I must have been asleep an hour or two when I was frightened so badly I almost jumped out of my bed, by the sudden glare of a vivid flash of lightning accompanied by the crash of a thunder-bolt that split to its roots an oak-tree standing in the back yard of our house.

I saw that it must be near evening, for the room was dark a moment after the explosion.

My first thought was of the excursionists. I ran to the front window and raised the curtain. The bay was untouched as yet by the storm. It lay in

beautiful placidity and just beyond the "gap" I could plainly see the belated fleet homeward bound.

I recrossed the room and looked out the back window.

A low reef of nimbus clouds were rolling up from the west. Big drops of rain had begun to fall. The tornado had not reached us, but it was coming rapidly.

I ran back again to the front of the house to see what the boats were doing. They were still sailing shoreward, their white canvas standing out in bold perspective under the darkening sky.

I concluded they were trying to reach the meadows at the gap, but any one might see that if they attempted to try the bay they would be sure to meet the storm before they could reach the land.

But unwisely they stood right on through the "gap," as if no cloud was threatening a brisk southeast wind behind them.

Did they place more confidence in their favorable breeze than I did? Or miscalculated the speed of the oncoming storm from the West?

If so, they must be lost, for at that very moment the disturbance was at the zenith and the vortex of the whirlwind carrying with it trees, fence-rails and fodder-stacks in its violent swirl, swept by and over the house and into the bay, roaring as it went.

The storm shut out the white sails of the boats, and I could see them no longer.

The family was terrified, and Miss Gorham, Anna and Mrs. Hodgkiss came running to me for conso-

lation. I assured them that the commotion would soon be over and trusted that the unlucky voyagers had taken in their canvas and were lying at anchor waiting for the storm to pass.

But instead of going off to seaward, to give Father Neptune a shaking up, the wind suddenly veered to the northeast, holding the cloud back where it was hanging over the bay, a nidus for all the electric forces of the atmosphere to hatch their demoniacal furies in.

And now from every point of the compass the serpentine lightning rushed, and the roar of the crackling thunder was without intermission, while the rain was driven in blinding sheets by the fierce wind.

Darkness was closing in and the probability was we should have an all-night northeaster.

Beginning with a tornado the weather had settled down into a cyclone, if the word "settled" can convey that meaning.

In the meantime Mr. Hodgkiss had come in dripping from the field, and the ladies being somewhat pacified I determined to see what could be done to rescue at least some of the ill-fated picnickers, for I had the best of reasons for fearing that some of the boats, if not all of them, were in dire distress.

It was a foolhardy undertaking, fraught with peril and without doubt small prospect of any other result than discomfiture to myself. But youth is venturesome, and I was a good boatsman and the young lady who had objected to my going on the



trip that morning—I could not but think of her being out there in such a storm, drowning it might be; for I knew what a coward Sharpe was and the Colonel was not so active as he had been forty years ago; so I donned my oilers and slipping out the back door, made my way as best I could, now in the midst of darkness so black that I could not see my way at all, and then under a flood of light so bright that all the sky seemed to be on fire. On I went, stopping in the gloom and running in the light, until I came to the place where I had seen in the morning of that day the only one batteau that was left behind when the pleasure party so gaily sailed away.

The boat was there, fortunately aground, or the wind would have sent her adrift long before that, and what was equally fortunate, a small brand-new storm-sail—leg of mutton in shape—was lying in her, with paddle and oars secured under the thwarts.

It was a small job for me to stand the sail up in the bow, spread it out, hang my rudder, see that my anchor was safely deposited under the forward deck and then to launch her.

This was my hardest task and should not have been attempted, but who stops to consider his strength when life and death are at issue?

How I ever got that sixteen-foot boat afloat I shall never know! But I dragged her off, first one end and then the other, set my sail and dashed away. I knew every square foot of the bay—where the drains ran and where the oyster rocks lay, and shaped my course accordingly.

The wind was northeast, the course southeast. I could lay within four points of the wind. This gave me an equal number of points to the good, or a beam-wind, as the sailors call it.

With the sheet-rope in one hand and the other hand on the tiller, I let her go, and through the glare and through the gloom of that awful night I sped like an arrow; boat, wind and waves careering in one furious, seething rush that beggars description.

How the storm within hallooed to the storm without! How cooling to my feverish brow was the angry wind as it rushed against it, toying with my hat, which had been blown off, and which I saw by the lightning's flash far to leeward careering on the wings of the gale! How it lifted my heavy hair and drove the salt spray in my face! Curiously enough, I took inspiration from the scene, and could scarcely refrain from shrieking. Then I quoted from Childe Harold, declaiming aloud: "Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed, and the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale, still must I on!"

And all this outburst of egotism that I might show to *her* that I was a man, with a strong right arm, an intelligent brain and a feeling heart, and not a dog!

Ah, vanity of vanities! Who in all this world is as vain as a young man in love—as foolishly persistent as an unrequited lover!

I am ashamed now to think I harbored such an unworthy motive.

But it was perhaps the last opportunity I should ever have of impressing myself upon her, and, notwithstanding my vow, I somehow hoped that in the fierce gale that I had so recklessly braved for her, she might hear or feel or see some token of my esteem—might feel that I did it all for her. And with such silly thoughts racing through my brain, I laughed in the face of the blast and steered my frail boat, with as little fear as the stormy petrel that trips with delight over the surging billows of the angriest sea.

I could hear the electric fluid "spat" on the water all around me and hiss like a serpent over my head. The sudden transition, from inky blackness to more than midday brightness blinded me; but the wind was steady, as northeasters are, and I steered my boat by it, her answering helm never failing me. The ingenuity of man has never created so life-like a machine as a sailboat. There seems to be a sympathetic unity between the rudder, the sails and the human mind that sits at the helm, and if the atmosphere is ever to be navigated or ballooned, it must be along the same lines and after the same principles that a boat is sailed.

I had proceeded more than half-way across the bay, which at that point was three miles wide, without encountering aught save the warring elements, and had begun to think all the boats had put back and were safely moored in guts among the meadows, when I caught sight of a dismantled craft directly ahead of me.

She was lying at anchor with mast standing, but her sail was torn into shreds and every wave was breaking over her.

I could see by the lightning's glare the fluttering of a woman's clothing and the frantic efforts a man was making to keep the boat free of water with a lunch-basket.

I think they must have taken me for the Flying Dutchman, or some other phantom ship, for, as I approached, the man who was baling ceased to work and all eyes seemed to be fixed upon me as I came rushing on. I soon heard the voice of Colonel Custis hailing and crying out:

"For God's sake, whoever you are, don't run us down!"

Next my ear caught the scream of frightened women, of whom there seemed to be a whole boat-load.

It developed afterward that the boat in which Mr. Watkins' family were had been abandoned, being, as Colonel Custis thought, unseaworthy, and he had kindly taken his neighbors into his own and by thus overloading her the present catastrophe had been invited.

I had just sufficient time to change my course so as to avoid a collision and clear their stern neatly. I then rounded my boat close up under their lee, tossing a rope to them, which the Colonel caught and fastened.

"By God! It's Jack!" he exclaimed. "Heaven be praised for so brave a lad! We're sinking, my boy! Can you help us?"



I said in reply: "Hurry, sir, and get the ladies on board."

"Be lively there, Mr. Watkins and you young men! Hand the women along. No ceremony," commanded the Colonel. "Bless my soul, Jack, you're a trump!"

There were in the disabled craft besides Colonel Custis, Mr. Watkins, Arabella, the two young gentlemen friends of the former, Julia and a colored maid—seven all told.

"Arabella, do you want to get into the nigger's boat?" drawled the indulgent Mr. Watkins, as he sat wrapped up in a gunny sack.

"No, no! Let Julia get on. She doesn't mind it," the young lady replied through her chattering teeth. "I'll remain here."

"But," began the pater to argue, "as this is an extraordinary occasion——"

But he was cut short by Colonel Custis:

"I'll be damned, if some of you don't get out of this boat, she'll go to the bottom. Come this way, Julia, you and the girl."

He was hanging on to the bow of my boat trying to keep the two from smashing themselves to pieces one against the other.

I was standing on the forward-deck of mine, holding on to the mast, ready to assist the first one that came forward.

"Did God Almighty ever see such jackasses!" roared the Colonel, now for once fully enraged. "Will you sit there and drown like so many fools?"

By that time Julia and the girl had crawled aft, and I took them up in my arms as they came and stowed them in the cockpit and again went forward.

The water was flying over us in sheets.

"Get out, all who want to go!" again shouted the Colonel.

"Now or never! I can't hold on much longer."

Mr. Sharpe scrambled by me, tumbling heels over head into the bottom of the batteau; but the others showed no indication of a desire to change quarters.

"Watkins, I hate to see a man make a fool of himself. If you're willing to drown, for Heaven's sake send your daughter this way," said Colonel Custis.

"No, we'll lie here till morning. The boat is lighter now and the storm's sure to be over by midnight," replied his worthy neighbor. And then in an undertone loud enough for me to hear:

"I'll be damned to blast if I take my daughter into that mess!"

"Good-bye!" shouted the Colonel.

"I'm sorry for you; but I'll be damned if there's any cure for a man who has negrophobia!" and as he sprang aboard we drifted off astern of the sinking batteau, and saw no more of her save when like a specter-craft we caught sight of her under the lightning, riding to her doom with her stupid crew.

"It's too bad to leave them there to perish," said Colonel Custis, remorsefully.

"Take me back, Jack. I'll get in with them and save them or perish with them."

But it was too late. If all the gold in the Klondike had been there it would have been far more secure from molestation, so far as we were concerned, than it is locked in the stony pockets of the Alaskan mountains; for the wind had veered again to the northwest and we had no choice but to run before it.

Away behind to the westward there was a rift in the bleak clouds sweeping low to the horizon, a sudden cooling off of the atmosphere, and I knew what was coming—a yet more merciless gale from the northwest. And soon it struck us, making our little bark shiver from stem to stern, as driving to leeward we were borne through the “gap” and into the inlet, seaward bound.

It now appeared instead of saving my priceless freight from a possible disaster I had conspired with the elements and with a demon’s subterfuge had cajoled my friends into a snare only to ensure their certain destruction.

And so far as I myself was concerned, what better fate might I ask? Sharpe, my hated rival, was at last in my power.

What sweeter vengeance might a man imagine than to see his inveterate foe struggling in vain in the arms of a merciless sea; of hearing his death gurgle, as, with palid face, he sank to rise no more until the Judgment Day?

And she, whom I had so long and vainly loved, might not I realize the only privilege I could ever hope to enjoy—that of dying with her. And this

even at the sacrifice of poor Colonel Custis and the maid. What power sustained me I know not, if it were not the instincts of a brave and virile manhood, so beautifully instilled into me by the personality and precepts of my Northern friend; for I was wild—wild with passion and heat of young blood, torn by ambition and writhing under the curse of caste that bound me fast and doomed me to degradation and despair.

But all the time my thoughts were of *him*—the grasp of his manly hand, the magnetism of his uplifting soul and his friendliness that surpassed that of a brother; and I heard his voice, ringing high over the noise of howling wind and clashing waves, crying:

“Shame, shame, Jack! Don’t forget to be a man; remember Caesar and the boatman! Have faith! Have courage! God will do the rest! God hath bestowed upon you the upright figure and the strong arm and you are hedged about with the glory of American citizenship. Complain not of the one, nor sully the other, but do thy duty.”

All this time we were flying straight into the open jaws of Death. Behind us rolled the scurrying waves, leaping up against my back and with an aggravating audacity splashing into the cockpit, or caught by the wind, flying over the staggering little craft, threatening to engulf her every minute, each onslaught more aggressive than the last and more savagely persistent in its efforts.

Julia was crouching resignedly at my feet. What



her thoughts were I did not know. She lay there speechless, trembling more from cold than fright, I believe, with her soft arm unconsciously wound round my bootleg.

I took off my oilcloth coat and spread it over her, to shield her as much as possible from the wind and spray.

Her quiet, gentle, "Thank you," awoke in me feelings of the deepest commiseration and toned me down to a calmer contemplation of the terrible situation.

I was no longer piqued at her conduct on the morning of that fateful day, but ready now to die a thousand deaths for her. The Colonel regarded my action with evident gratitude, for he offered his own coat, which, of course, I refused, telling him the steering kept me sufficiently warm.

"I fear, Jack, we are worse off now than neighbor Watkins," he remarked, quoting the old proverb: "A fool for luck," etc., he himself being a good boatman and understanding our predicament perfectly well.

And such a predicament!

The tide was ebbing strongly and the wind ever increasing. To luff or to keep away one point to either hand was instant annihilation.

With the wind on my port-quarter and the boat on the same tack, the south point of the beach at my right hand, the only possible thing for me to do was to let her yaw off, whenever I could do so, without jibing the sail.

The lightning having ceased, pitchy darkness now enveloped us, only relieved by the illumination of the curdling foam scintillating the crest of every billow.

There was little talking. Sharpe was sitting in the middle of the boat with his head bowed down like a drenched fowl.

The maid was silently weeping. I do not know that any of them at that time but the Colonel and myself fully realized the awful danger to which we were exposed. I was glad they did not. I could hear now and then the stifled groans of the good old gentleman who refrained from saying anything to alarm his daughter, but must have been suffering untold agony on her account.

Nearer and nearer toward the inlet we flew.

The erstwhile distant roar of the surf on the outer bar grew louder. I could see now this one and now that of my ill-fated passengers raise up his or her head and listen.

The silence on board the boat became painful.

Julia clutched my rubber bootleg tighter as we began to engage the incoming roll of the sea, as if by instinct.

Suddenly she raised herself up and inquired: "Where are we going?" I could not reply.

"Father," she said, "we must be near the sea. I hear the surf so plainly."

"Yes, my child," he replied. I knew by his voice he was weeping.

Its altered tone seemed to frighten her.

"Is there danger, Jack?" she asked, looking up into my face imploringly, her golden hair all wet and tangled.

"I trust not, ma'am," I replied, my voice betraying me.

"Can you save us? Oh, Jack, can you save us?" she implored.

Ask a mother how she feels when, sitting at the bedside of her dying child, she hears from lips white with fever and damp with the dew-drops of Death, the eager, trembling words:

"Am I better, mamma?"

Ask such an one, for she alone can tell you how I felt. I could not answer her.

Higher and higher the rollers came, chasing each other in from the ocean, lifting the bow of the batteau high in the air and then running past us rapidly, plunging her headlong into the next—so rapidly that the frail thing had scarcely time to clear the next.

Had we passed the point of beach? If so, then we were lost.

In less than ten brief minutes the boat would be swamped and the surf would be tossing our dead bodies, from breaker to breaker, in its hellish glee.

The Colonel had divined my plan all along, and for its execution had trusted me implicitly.

But the increasing height of the billows alarmed him, and, rising to his feet he attempted to get aft.

"We have passed the point, Jack, I fear," he said, "and if so, all is lost!"

Just at that moment I caught sound of the surge on the inner side of the beach and felt the force of the reflex action of the waves from the shore. The wind was coquetting with the leach of my sail, stealthily lifting my sheet, and I called loudly to him to sit down, when he shouted:

"There it is, there! My God! We are passing by it!"

Once more I called to him to sit down, and this time he luckily obeyed me, more, I suppose in despair than in obedience to my command, and my tiller went up hard against the windward rail.

Like a flash the boom whipped over, giving Mr. Sharpe's head a severe blow, as it passed, and, beautifully answering her helm, the brave little craft, assisted by the back current that set strongly around the point, luffed up into the wind, and lifted by the swell ran her grating keel hard and fast into the pebbly ground.



## CHAPTER XXII

"HERE you are, Colonel," I said as I leaped out of the boat on to the shore, dragging the cable with me. "Here you are, right where you started from last afternoon, safe and sound!"

"Thank God, thank God!" he exclaimed, as he came clambering out, and rushing forward actually took me in his arms.

"You have saved us, Jack—saved us all! How shall we ever repay you?"

"I have only done my duty, sir," I replied. "Let us proceed to discharge our freight." And setting the killeck deep into the sand, I waded in to assist the women to land.

I found Julia bordering upon a condition of collapse. I gathered her up, dripping as she was, and placing her in the arms of the Colonel, went back and, taking up the maid in the same fashion, set her on shore also. Then I began to wrap up my sail.

As I was doing so Sharpe stood up, shook himself and demanded in a rough tone to be lifted to the beach, but I paid no attention to him. This made him angry and he began to expostulate in a very profane and unbecoming manner, and to curse me. This drew the Colonel's attention:

"Mr. Sharpe, I'm obliged to tell you you've

neither generosity or good breeding. Hasn't that young man done enough for you—to save your life—that you should stand there and abuse and insult him? If you had the common instincts of a gentleman you would thank him instead of abusing him. Pardon me, sir; I regret that I have had to speak thus to one whose breeding should have served him in better stead. This is no time or place to bandy words, but your insolence, sir, is unpardonable."

The rebuke was a severe one, and the young aristocrat felt it keenly. While I was tying up the sail he got out, and sulkily wading ashore stood off by himself on the beach, feeling, no doubt, very uncomfortable in mind and body.

I really felt sorry for him, and wished I had acceded to his impertinent demand, for to me it seemed like an untoward and very unfortunate occurrence, coming as it did after our escape from so many perils, when there should have been only joy and thanksgiving.

It appeared that I was bound to be bothered by him all the days of my life. I saw Colonel Custis was very much hurt over the affair, and I have not the least doubt that he regretted it very much more than Sharpe did.

We found a fisherman's camp built of seaweed on the island, and picking up some driftwood here and there, I soon had a fire going, before which our marooners dried their clothing, and after the lapse of an hour we all began to be quite comfortable, the Colonel talking over the events of the past day, and

especially expressing his solicitude for the remnant of his crew that were left in the sinking boat, as well as others of the scattered fleet, of whose destiny we were all seriously in doubt.

After awhile, under the kind attentions of her maid, who had by this time recovered from her bewilderment, Julia prepared to catch a nap, the Colonel, who had stretched himself out on some dry grass, began to snore, and leaving Sharpe sitting morose and still brooding over the Colonel's severe castigation, by the fire, I wrapped myself in my oilers and, as it was my place, lay down outside the camp door to rest.

The storm had passed, the stars were glittering in the clear sky, and although not quite as comfortably situated as I would be had I been home, I was weary and soon fell asleep.

In the morning long before sunrise I waked up and fetching the batteau around inside the beach, I aroused my crew, and with a stiff gale still blowing from the West, we started to beat up the inlet.

Having fared so roughly the night before, we did not mind the wetting we got in this thrash to windward, and we were all eager to learn the fate of our friends.

There was not a sail in sight. As we cleared the "gap" on the bay side we caught sight of the boat we had left only a few hours before in distress. She was bottom upwards, and as we approached nearer we saw a man clinging to the keel. It was Mr. Watkins.

The batteau had filled during the night and then turned turtle. Of her occupants only the gentleman I have mentioned remained with her. Keene and Arabella had met a watery grave.

We dragged the poor fellow into our boat, scarcely alive.

Overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his daughter, and as storm-beaten as a human being could well be, he was unable to utter a single word.

The Colonel and I took off our coats and wrapped them about him and set him up near me in the cockpit.

By accident his cold and shriveled hand came in contact with mine.

He started as if stung by an adder, and crawling toward the bow of the boat, shrunk down in the bottom in utter exhaustion.

"This is a terribly tragedy," remarked Colonel Custis, sadly, as if talking to himself, "but the obstinacy of some people is beyond my comprehension."

We sailed about the spot for an hour or two, but failed to find the drowned, and then steered away for the landing, just as the other boats were seen coming out of the meadows, where, by good management they had harbored during the storm. The bodies of Arabella and Keene were found several weeks after, floating in the bay.

I will not dwell longer on this sad theme, except to say that I again received the hearty thanks of the Colonel when we were once safe on shore, and a look



which I took for heart-felt gratitude from his foster-daughter.

Mr. Watkins was conveyed up to his house, accompanied by Sharpe, neither of them signifying the least gratitude to me or anyone else for their rescue. Poor Mr. Watkins! He had enough to do thinking of the terrible disaster that had befallen him, and Mr. Sharpe still brooded over the insult—the cutting remarks the Colonel had made to him on the beach.

For many days after this affair I was depressed in spirits and longed to bid adieu once more to the "Neck."

I saw no more of Julia than I did before, and felt like one—unworthy thought—whose labor of love has been all in vain.

Miss Gorham, who had missed me soon after I left the house on that fateful night and, with the family, had met us all at the landing the next morning, did not fail to observe my despondency, and did her utmost to dispel the shadows, but without avail.

It seemed to me that I had come to the parting of the ways.

It was like the ominous calm before the whirlwind, when all Nature seems to pause to catch breath to breast the onslaught of the coming tempest. My future looked dark and uninviting.

Love, that had tormented me unceasingly for long and weary years, even drooped his wings, like those of a song bird when the dog star rules, and strangely new influences were signaling me from afar.

Perhaps it was the war spirit that was abroad in the land, stirring millions of American hearts besides mine. The young Giant of the West was about to try his strength with the oldest nation in Europe, and Colonel Roosevelt, who was at that time Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was already forming his regiment of Rough Riders for the Cuban campaign, he having already resigned his civil office with the intention of accompanying his regiment to the field of battle as second in command.

My heart was set on going with him and I ruthlessly betrayed the confidence of my benefactress by withholding from her my real intentions, which were to apply for a trooper's place in that justly celebrated corps upon my arrival in New York.

On the day I left home, Colonel Custis came over as usual to bid me Godspeed; but this time he was alone. Julia was not with him.

My chagrin was disproportionate to the cause of it. I was unreasonably disappointed, even to madness.

I was leaving her, "it might be for years and it might be forever," and she would not even show her face to me before I left. Poor fool! what right had I on earth to expect it?

When Anna asked why she had not come over the Colonel said she was still feeling badly over the effects of her boating trip, but in a few days would doubtless call.

She had not even sent me a formal good-bye.  
God! It was hard to bear!

But what good would that do me? I chafed and fretted like a spoilt child and then meanly took my leave of them all in a crabbed, petulant mood that brought tears to Miss Gorham's eyes and filled me with shame and remorse many a day afterward when it was too late to repair the injury my lack of manhood had occasioned.

Arriving in New York, I wired Colonel Roosevelt, asking him to write me if he would accept my services, or no, and in two days received an affirmative reply. He said he had to refuse hundreds of applicants, but, remembering me well, and pleased with my accomplishments, both physical and mental, could not find it in his heart to deny me, and that I must come on at once to Washington to be mustered in, after which I was to proceed to San Antonio, Texas, to join the regiment, which was rendezvousing there.

I immediately sat down and wrote Miss Gorham, telling her all about it and praying her forgiveness and thanking her over and over again for all she had done for me. Half a dozen times I inserted a message to Julia, and as many times tore the letter up and began another. I thought over all the expressions and all the forms of speech I could conceive of in which to convey some fitting idea—some little token of respectful remembrance that might not be taken as insolence, but I could settle on none.

So, with the kindest regards for the family and Joe and my most respectful good-bye to the Colonel, I closed my epistle and mailed it, setting out for the South the same day.

Thank God! I mentally ejaculated as I sped away toward the National Capital. Thank God for American institutions! I love my country, for she is not to be blamed for social ostracism. Her democratic ideals are perfect, and in the course of time will lead all men up to a full recognition of political and civil equality—the equality of true citizenship; for, I said, if ever caste is to be abolished in this world, it will find its grave in this country under the stars and stripes.

The corner-stone of the Republic was laid by our fathers upon the immortal principle of individual liberty and although designing men have stolen the livery of Jefferson to serve their undemocratic purposes in, the one great truth will still survive and good men will cleave unto it and shape the nation's course by it, and the ideas embraced in the Declaration of Independence will at last prevail. In the American Army I shall at least be permitted to die for my native land, if I am not permitted to live a freeman in it.

It is presumable that no man will object to my taking to my bosom the first Mauser bullet that is aimed at my country's flag; and my file-leader will experience no squeamishness in calling me brother. When Glory stands weeping over a gallant soldier's bier, she recks not the color of his skin, nor asks the conditions of his birth.

For what more can a man give than his life to the commonwealth?

With thoughts such as these, I approached the



beautiful city and beheld from my car window the distant outlines of the Goddess of Liberty surmounting the great dome of the Capitol, growing in grandeur at every turn of the rapidly flying car-wheels.

Truly, I said, the conception was never meant to be ironical.

Had not the American people, with candid sentiments, thus thought to defy the principle for which they had struggled so bravely in the days of the Revolution?

Its full fruition might be far away, but were not the people striving to attain unto it? Would it not grow to greater heights and grander proportions as they approached it? Surely the centuries were leading up to it, dragging the world at their heels.

As for my country, it is safe, so long as the patriot's eye is fixed upon that glorious apotheosis, and blessed is he who shall see the day when prejudice and caste shall be dethroned, as was British tyranny in the older days, and full and perfect freedom be proclaimed throughout the world.

I know not how it may affect others, but I seemed to be uplifted as soon as I caught in my nostrils the atmosphere of Washington City.

No longer hedged about by the prohibitory statutes of the States, where one not a citizen is almost afraid to walk abroad, lest he commit some offence for which a heavy fine is extorted or imprisonment awaits him, here in this one little spot he feels the ægis of a shield broader and greater than that of

Minerva overshadowing him; and standing there under its shadow can truly say, "My Country! Sweet land of Liberty!"

And for that country I had come to offer my services and my life.

## CHAPTER XXIII

To find Colonel Roosevelt (then Lieutenant-Colonel), and to pass the surgeon's examination were plain sailing, thanks to the absence of red-tape on the one hand and a good constitution on the other, and having been mustered into the First United States Voluntary Cavalry only three days previous to the departure of Troop K for the Southwest, I left Washington with my fellow-troopers—the "Dandy Rough Riders of the East," to join our Western compatriots at San Antonio.

We were, it might be said, a motley crowd, composed of young, middle-aged and even elderly-looking men, civil war veterans, college-bred and studious-looking, pale-faced youngsters, policemen, professional men and city-clerks, among whom there appeared to be small affinity and less congruity.

There was not much sociability on the way, each man traveling on his own hook, but all bound for one destination, and each individual having in mind one set purpose. I had plenty of time *en route* to think, and during that long ride my whole strange and unaccountable career passed before my mind's eye, from its lowly beginnings in the city of New Haven down to the last time I bade adieu to my friends in Virginia, out of sorts with myself, and,

notwithstanding the good advice of him who was now to be my leader in this patriotic expedition, still warring against an inevitable destiny, still unable to snatch from my aching heart the pitiless shaft of Cupid.

I say inevitable because there appeared no escape from, nor evasion of, the lot to which by the inscrutable ways of Providence I had been assigned. The degradation of my birth and antecedents haunted me everywhere. Past memories had brought back the same old curse—the curse of color.

"Can it be possible I shall have to walk under this shadow all my life?" I turned up the backs of my hands. During the vacation I had exposed myself much to the sun while fishing, and my hands were very brown. Indulging a misanthropic humor, I imagined I was turning darker.

"Yes, the damned taint is there," I almost cried out in my horrified imagination.

I tried to lose myself; to forget the past, but I could not. There was but one consolation and that was to die in Cuba.

Onward, onward, rushing train! Bear me swiftly to my doom! Where else but on the battle-field might I realize my manhood or die with any glory?

We arrived at San Antonio on the 10th, and after breakfast, which we ordered at a hotel, we laid aside our civil costumes, as well as customs, and, arraying ourselves in military garments, went to work. I deem it out of place to speak in detail of the incidents of camp life during our brief stay at this place;



of how such a heterogeneous body of men with remarkable adaptation became one in purpose, brotherly in feeling and comrades in patriotism under the democratic genius of a born leader of men who won respect and devotion from millionaire, Indian, cowboy and student alike, and of the many amusing things that happened during our preparation for active duty in the field. Other writers have done and will yet do that far better than I can.

But I do want to say that in its composition that regiment of so many different men, taken from almost every station in life, is a wonderful epitome of what the American people are and what they may accomplish when caste has no place in a community, nor pride of birth a disturbing element.

To my mind it proves beyond the shadow of a doubt what well disciplined socialism is capable of doing. America's hope is in America's democracy.

For once in my life I felt that I lived in a world where true manhood was appreciated and respected, no matter the source from which it sprang. Gold is gold, whether found in sand or quartz.

No one knew, or asked whether I was born in a palace or a garret, or whether my mother was a queen or a squaw. Would that such a spirit pervaded the length and breadth of my native land.

I was enrolled, thanks to my good friend, under an assumed name, but among my fellows enjoyed the beautiful soubriquet of "Baldy," on account of my superabundance of hair, of which I was ever vainly proud.

On the 29th of May we left San Antonio for Tampa, from which point we were to take our departure for the Queen of the Antilles.

From thence, in a few days, through the untiring efforts of our field officers we were able to embark and we sailed away for Santiago, singing as we went, the old Mexican campaign song:

"There's light on the wave, the moon shines bright,  
Fill the bowl! Fling sorrow away,

My boys!

Should the breeze not fail we'll float to-night  
On the waves of Arranzas Bay,

My boys!

"There will some of us sleep 'neath a stranger's sod,  
And some will go back o'er the sea,

My boys!

But the heart that is true to its country and God,  
Will report at the grand reveillé

My boys!"

We landed, as all the world knows, on the South coast of Cuba at Daiquiri, much after the manner of Julius Cæsar on the coast of Britain, in the surf, many of the horses and a few men getting drowned. Among the former was one of Colonel Roosevelt's pair of bronchos. The troopers' horses had all been left behind at Tampa.

A little way from the place of disembarkation, we selected a spot near the river between some low ranges of hills where the tall grass was higher than our tents, and went into camp, a blazing semi-tropical sun overhead and a number of snakes, lizards,

land crabs, and other poisonous reptiles crawling about us in the grass.

The enemy had been shelled away at the approach of our fleet, and with no Spaniard in sight, we went to work as jolly as men at a picnic, to make ourselves comfortable, expecting to spend several days here before taking up our march toward Santiago.

But the gallant little ex-Confederate General Joe Wheeler, a veteran in the game of war, was in for a quick campaign, and an order to prepare to march was communicated to us on the 23rd of May, and at one o'clock we struck our tents and began to move forward over a rough trail that led us through a jungle of impenetrable woods towards Siboney.

The weather was so hot that many of our men, unused to walking, straggled behind, but after resting awhile came on toward evening and fell into the ranks again.

As for me, inured as I had been in my youth to toil in the open field, day after day in the summer time, it was no hardship. My activity and endurance attracted the attention of Colonel Roosevelt, and I was made an orderly and marched close by his side.

Our fellows were all plucky, however, and outmarched the regulars, for we came across a foun-dered soldier in regulation blue uniform, every rod or two, lying in the bushes along the narrow road.

At last, after the night had set in, we passed the campfires of some regiments that had preceded us, encamped on the site of the ranch we had been so long in quest of, and going just beyond them we

bivouacked where we halted, a drenching rain interfering with our preparations for tea, and making us all feel very miserable.

I do not think our men had any idea that they would have to fight on the morrow. At least they did not so express themselves.

But, being several times during the early hours of that evening at the headquarters of the regiment, I was satisfied, from remarks made by Colonel Wood and Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt, both of whom had been in communication with General Young, our brigadier, that the Spaniards were near at hand, and that we could not fail to strike them before the sunset of another day.

Before the dawn we were up and off again.

Two trails lay before us: one crossing an abrupt hill immediately in our front, and the other winding round the hill to our right. These two trails converged into a common road five miles away at a place called Guasimas, or as the natives called it, Las Guasimas, a mere ranch, the remains of a former sugar plantation; and from thence a better and broader highway led on to Santiago, over a beautiful country of rolling hills bedecked with brilliant wild flowers and studded with lofty palms.

The two paths were narrow and tortuous, bordered on either side by a thick jungle with now and then a stream of water and a few clearings.

The Rough Riders were ordered to take the hill trail.

Colonel Wood, with an advance guard, led the



van, while Colonel Roosevelt rode at the head of the second division which followed close on behind.

The greater part of the way we marched in single file, the regiment stretched out in great length along the winding trail.

After awhile the order was given to rest, and Captain Capron passed along moving toward the front. Some of the men were lying down in the road. The sun was blazing down upon us through the opening between the trees overhead, but the scene was not by any means dull, for many birds were singing all about us, notes of the cuckoo being specially attractive.

We privates did not know then that these same woods were full of Spaniards, and that many of the bird calls we heard were signals of our foes.

It is said that the officers did. However, that is of small moment.

One significant fact was, that there stretched along on either side of this trail a strong wire fence fastened to the trees and to posts where no trees were convenient.

By and by a report ran along down the line that the Spaniards were only a little way ahead of us, but everything was so quiet I think the men did not believe it.

Anyway, we were ordered to be silent.

Carelessly while we were resting, Colonel Roosevelt took up the end of a piece of wire attached to the fence, and squinting at it, suddenly exclaimed: "This wire is new and was nailed to this post no longer than yesterday."

Just at this juncture there was a slight commotion along the line, and the crack of a rifle resounded through the jungle.

The fierce command: "Attention!" from Colonel Roosevelt brought every man to his feet.

Then down the ranks came an order from Colonel Wood to Colonel Roosevelt to deploy three of the troops to the right and clear the woods on that side of the trail.

Tearing down the wire fence and scrambling through the bushes, the left wing wheeled into line as best they could and we spread out into the woods, advancing toward the front. As we did so we met a volley from our hidden enemy, and the battle was on.

But it was a sorry battle on our part, for we could not tell for our lives where to shoot, or from what direction came the whistling Mausers that were cruelly tearing the life out of our brave soldiers.

Our people began to fire at random through the woods at first, but Colonel Roosevelt stopped them, saying: "Wait, boys, till you see them."

But there was no waiting on the part of the Spaniards.

There was a noise as of a swarm of bees humming over our heads continually; the falling of leaves and boughs, as if clipped off by driving hailstones, and just at that moment a palm leaf struck me in the face and I found myself lying in a heap on the ground.

A ball had struck my right side, traced a rib which it had fractured, and glancing downward had passed

through the calf of my left leg, splintering the posterior bone and being deflected by some unaccountable freak pierced my boot and embedded itself in the top of my foot.

I could not have been a great while in an unconscious condition, for when I came to myself I could hear the men, now out of sight, but bearing toward the left, quite across and on the other side of the trail. At all events, I was alone, and not only suffering from the stinging sensation of my wounds, but bleeding very profusely. Thus had I been struck down in the very beginning of the campaign.

My first thought was to rise and follow the battalion. I staggered to my feet and attempted to walk, but fell headlong on my face to the ground. It is well that I did, for a bullet grazed my back as I went down, and another and another sped over me, one nipping the point of my elbow, as I turned my body over to get breath, and if possible an easier position, for by this time I was suffering great pain.

There was a large tree between me and the direction from where the shots came, and dragging my rifle along with me, I crawled behind it and watched for my foe.

I was his equal in woodcraft, if I was so badly hurt, and by tracing the line of fire, at last located the Spaniard. He was concealed in a tree top about a hundred yards away. I adjusted my gun, and lodging it against the side of my own barricade, sent a "Craggy" whistling to his perch.

A sombrero and gun fell to the ground and in less

than an hour I heard in that direction the flapping of a vulture's wings among the rustling palm leaves.

My shot must have struck him in a vital spot.

The pain in my foot began to be excruciating and my side smarted as if on fire.

I began to feel stiff and extremely sore. It then dawned upon me how badly I was hurt, and I began to think of the horror of dying there all alone in the woods.

I had conjured up to myself a glorious death on the battle-field, in the open, in presence of my commanding officer, and in sight of my fellow soldiers, and in full view of the enemy, charging, it might have been upon them, and with my expiring gaze fixed on my country's flag; but to perish ignobly there and have my eyeballs pulled from their sockets by the vultures, while yet my heart was pulsating and my brain active, was anything but desirable.

By this time the wave of battle had rolled far toward the front and left.

I could still hear desultory firing, but that was all.

The cuckoos had ceased and the song birds had been frightened away, but ever and anon the clash of a great bald-headed vulture's wings came to my ear like that I had heard in the tree where the dead Spaniard was.

Would they soon be looking for me?



## CHAPTER XXIV

AND this was dying on the battle-field—the fate I had so ardently coveted. I was not, I supposed, half a mile away from the place where the firing began. I could hear, or I imagined I heard voices of men who seemed to be passing up and down the trail, for I was not a great way from it, and tried to call to them for assistance, but my throat was too dry and my tongue so stiff I could only make a sort of guttural sound that could not be heard ten steps away; and I was growing weaker all the time from loss of blood.

It was not long before I heard the sliding, slipping noise of creeping things, and casting my eyes about me saw those ogle-eyed Cuban land crabs, which sometimes come in droves to feed upon any dead or helpless thing they can find within their reach. Nor were all my sources of dread from the ground. A crash of flapping wings in the top of the tree I was leaning back against caused me to look upward, and there half-plumed stood that loathsome scavenger of the tropics, peering down upon me, with its cold and cruel eye, ready to descend and begin his feast.

I reached for my rifle and tried to shoot the horrid thing, but my strength was gone. I could not raise the gun from the ground.

And while I beat off the crabs as well as I could with a small stick of wood, and kept my eye on the voracious bird, the sun went down and the chill of a Cuban night came on.

At the time I felt there was not a dry thread of clothing on my body. I was thirsty then; now, I was parching with thirst within and freezing with cold without.

My teeth chattered like the gear of a sewing machine and my tongue was as dry as parchment.

Surely, I thought, I cannot last much longer, and if the crabs do not eat me up before day the vultures will finish me in the morning.

My situation was made more deplorable by the belief that I yet might be saved if somebody would only come to my rescue. But no one came, and in that lonesome, God-forsaken place I saw the shades of an awful night come suddenly down upon me with the great bird roosting in the tree over my head, and the crabs gathering bolder as the darkness advanced, and as hope began to give place to despair, so the glory and glamor of war faded away and with the chill of death in my limbs and a buzzing of a million of insects in my ears, too stiff and sore now to move, I rolled over on my well side and lay there half dead, the pinching of the crabs at my finger ends serving to keep me in remembrance that I was still in the land of the living. It is strange that in such a condition I could think of home.

I suppose I should not call it thinking. It was mere dreaming—the reflex action of past impres-

sions—the looking in upon the tablets of the brain and reading one's life over again—seeing with sub-conscious visions the identical forms and faces of those who, dead or living, were far, far away.

How the spirits of the past flocked to me, like homing pigeons to their cote! And how real they were!

What grotesque forms some of them took. For my life I could not disassociate Mr. Watkins from that vulture that sat perched up in the tree waiting for daylight to finish me. I actually imagined I heard him say: "Damned to blast if I don't breakfast on you to-morrow morning."

All through the woods I had noticed, before I was shot, the most beautiful wild flowers. I had plucked some of them on the march, but found most of them scentless. But I found one—something like sweet eglantine that grew on a sort of vine, and was simply exquisite. I remembered how fond Julia was of wild roses and how I used to scratch my fingers plucking them for her in the brambles when I was a boy.

I was surrounded by all these where I lay, and especially by the latter, whose trailing vine hung over my prostrate head and afforded me the only pleasure I experienced there in my forlorn condition.

These flowers assumed the characters in my death—dreams of my friends at home, and the one with the odor was *She*—faint to my dying nostrils, but oh, how fragrant! In them I saw her face half pensive, half averted and calm, but like the calm of a deep and mysterious river.

It was well that I should die and leave her, since if to live it must be without her—she, the pure and beautiful, ever in my heart, but forever beyond the touch of my Cain-cursed hand.

How averse was Nature to giving up the battle! How I struggled to assert my individuality! But I was going; and only those devilish crabs gnawing at my fingers seemed to keep me alive.

But at length even pain, the tireless sentinel, got drowsy and relaxed his vigilance, and from the silence of the dark world around me I passed into the darker regions of forgetfulness and oblivion—that condition which knows no day or night, nor things present, nor things past, and where even the voice of Love is muter than harp in Tara's Halls.

I did not know how long I had remained thus, but they told me I had been found by my beloved Colonel the next day after the battle. He had missed me, and leaving the encampment at the front had come back over the battle-ground and had me taken to the clearing in the trail, where had been improvised a field hospital, at which place I awoke, after the ball had been extracted from my foot and my leg and side properly bandaged by the good doctors who were still busy with their sleeves rolled up and their instruments in their hands. They had labored over the wounded all night long, and there was plenty of work still for them to do.

The gallant Captain Capron and daring Sergeant Fish and others as gallant and brave were already "sleeping 'neath a stranger's sod."



I was stretched on a bed of blankets spread on the ground under a sort of tent, made of palms, done up like a mummy, my ears, my fingers, as well as my body and leg.

Flies were buzzing, vultures were sweeping over the spot, a broiling sun beating down over the place and a sickening odor astir.

A Red Cross man was bathing my face with water from a nearby brook.

When they found that I was awake a surgeon came and asked me how I felt.

I tried to speak, but if the whole island of Cuba had been offered me I could not have articulated a single word.

He called an attendant and had a flask of brandy brought. Wetting the corner of a pocket-handkerchief in a diluted portion of this, he put it to my lips. It refreshed me very much and after awhile I made shift to ask if I was much hurt, and if Colonel Roosevelt was alive?

I was informed that I was seriously, but not mortally wounded, and that our brave Lieutenant-Colonel was not only alive, but as General Young was ill, Colonel Wood would be promoted to his place and Colonel Roosevelt would hereafter command the Rough Riders.

Then they told me all about how my dear Colonel had found me in the woods, looking after his missing troopers, and had me taken care of. "And if you had remained there much longer," said the Red Cross man, "there wouldn't have been much of you left."

I inquired of the doctor if he thought I would be well enough in a few days to go on with the regiment. He laughed, and said he thought I was knocked out for the remainder of the campaign, but I must cheer up; that I had a good constitution and would doubtless recover.

The next day we had a visit from Colonel Roosevelt.

He was sad over the loss of his gallant boys, but full of praise for the good fight the regiment had put up under such trying circumstances.

He was glad to see me so comfortable and said:

"I knew you were made of good stuff, Jack. If you hadn't been the vultures would have had you long ago. They were holding an inquest over you when I found you, but I suppose they were afraid to tackle you. They were holding high carnival over a dead Spaniard only a little way from where you lay. Anyhow we drove 'em out the jungle, didn't we?"

Then he said it was highly probable I would not be able to do any more fighting in Cuba; that he would send me back to the hospital ship "Olivette," and when I should be sufficiently recovered to stand the voyage he would see that I was sent back to the United States.

He was looking superb that morning, with all his fighting blood up to the top notch, his teeth shining, his face animated and his whole physique the very impersonation of impulsive energy, and tenacious endurance.

He had left off his blouse and was consequently in his shirt sleeves. His regulation hat cut full of holes to admit the air, and hanging behind it, shielding his bovine neck and descending to his shoulders was a muffler fastened to the inner band of his hat.

He was belted at the waistband, carried pistols, but no sword. His khaki breeches were soiled with dirt and colored with perspiration and his leggins spattered with mud. Instead of troopers' boots, he wore ordinary tan shoes.

His close-cut hair and bristly moustache made him look rugged, but there was in his eye, when you gazed deeply down into it, the evidence of a sympathetic soul as real and unmistakable as his outward personality was robust, giving one the two-fold impression of a man within and another without. The one material, but of heroic mould, and the other spiritual beyond the common lot of ordinary men.

He saw I was loath to part with him, and go home, but he encouraged me, saying that I had done all I could for my country, and that not only he but the nation would honor me for the service I had done, adding:

"When the war is over, as it will soon be, if I live to get back, I want to see more of you than I have, and shall ever hold you as one of the bravest of my troopers.

"Go back to your friends in Virginia and get well. There's plenty of work for you in the future. God bless you!"

Relaxing the grasp of my bandaged hand, he leaped upon his horse "Texas" like the athlete that he was and went off splashing through the stream that flowed close along by the clearing and was soon lost in the jungle.



## CHAPTER XXV

NEXT day I was borne on a stretcher back again along the narrow trail to Siboney, where I lay that night under a shanty that had formerly been occupied by the rebels and which, as was afterward verified, was the very nidus of the Cuban scourge, yellow fever. I was not aware of it then, and if I had been I could not have helped myself, if I had cared to, for I was knocked out in spirit as well as in body.

To be struck down in the first skirmish; to be conveyed back again; to be for months, at least, a burden on my friends and to have old wounds reopened, by far more unhealable than the fresh ones I carried, were reflections not the most encouraging or pleasant to entertain.

But the ways of Providence are past finding out and as helpless as an infant, I was taken to the "Olivette" early the next day.

Here, little was wanted to make all of us wounded people as comfortable as our physical condition would allow. Competent medical attention, proper nourishment and good nursing were not absent; but my wounds were slow to heal, especially the one in my foot, and true to his promise after the battle of San Juan Hill, Colonel Roosevelt saw that I was transported to Fortress Monroe, from whence I

easily reached the peninsula and the "Neck" in less than a month from the day I was shot.

By this time I was able to walk moderately well with the aid of a crutch, but my blood was poisoned with malaria and I was just ready to fall down upon my bed where I was doomed to struggle with a depleting fever for six weeks longer.

But for all this I had in Miss Gorham a never tiring, never failing friend.

Day and night she watched at my bedside like a good angel and her purse strings were never tied. In fact, the whole family—whether remunerated or not—(I suppose they were) bestowed upon me the very best of attention, and Joe and Colonel Custis often sat up with me, thus relieving my angelic nurse.

My arrival had created quite a sensation in the neighborhood, my illness affording my enemies a cause for renewed attack.

They claimed that I had brought yellow fever among them, and so stirred up the common people that threats were made to burn the house where I lay.

I think only one thing deterred them, and that was because I was a soldier.

It is no less strange than true that violent men are held in leash by fear of the national government. To what lengths the people of some of the States would go were there no Federal authority, is hard to say, so pernicious are the effects of certain political teachings.

Thank God for the restraining influence and the prerogatives of national citizenship! Anyhow, my friends were true as steel and never faltered in their attentions.

But what these poor people had suffered on my account will never be known. Even to this day they bear the stigma—not from well-bred and educated people, but on the part of the lower classes—that attached to them during the long and troublous years of my adoption—so strong and so unreasonable is prejudice and so unaccountable the fact that the votaries of caste are themselves the very ones who are its most unfortunate victims.

To these, the services I had rendered my country, insignificant as they were, were an especial affront. And although I had shed my blood for the flag, and my traducers stayed at home in inglorious ease, the flag was by that very consecration dishonored and insulted.

How many prayed for me to die, I know not. Did Julia Custis? I hope not. She came to the house nearly every day during my illness, but never once entered my room, although she brought over, and sent by others, many delicacies and bouquets of sweet and refreshing flowers.

For all these I was thankful, and although I was very sick, I could differentiate between her footsteps and those of anybody else on the porch, as she came and went, the days that marked her absence taking to themselves the length of years, when by dint of chance she failed to call.

By and by the acerbity of my fever began to relax and I got on my feet again, looking very much like a ghost, but slightly yellower, and feeling as if I had been for a long time an inhabitant of another world.

I was far from being my real self and would not be for many months to come.

I took but small interest in what was going on around and about me, although there was much to observe had I been an interested party with the activity of brain to weigh and consider events.

The autumn was approaching, and Colonel Custis had declared himself a candidate for State Senator of his district.

The nomination was by primaries, and to these he had appealed.

The odds were all against him on account of his liberal views of things, and although he was a Democrat politically and socially, his was the democracy of the fathers, and such democracy was tabooed by the younger leaders of the party, pure democracy was a lost and now unknown quantity to the average voter of the State. There was no such thing.

A choice at the primaries was equivalent to an election, and the schemes and tricks which had come in vogue since the war in general elections were outrageously resorted to in these. Colonel Custis was above such unfair and disgraceful practices, and therefore must suffer from their consequences.

But he belonged to an old and honorable family,



was rich and in some sense popular, and being an eloquent speaker, stood a good chance, in a clear field and a free fight, of winning the race.

Had I been other than I was in more than one sense it would have been my delight to canvass for him, but my hands were tied and my brain upset. So I could only wish him well.

I was not a politician then, nor am I one now; but I knew the worth of the man and hoped he would be elected. He came over often and never failed to talk over the campaign with Miss Gorham. I was sure there was another campaign he took a greater interest in, however, and the end of which he longed to see with much more anxiety than he did to see himself Senator.

He had been a patient, but assiduous suitor of Miss Gorham's hand for lo, these many years, and certainly had a right by this time to be rewarded for his pains.

How commonplace all this seemed to me then.

How little is there in what I am writing now to brace up the patient reader to bear the spectacular demonstration of a grave climax that should hold him spellbound to the last chapter of this plain story which is so near at hand.

How different I would have felt had I known what was so shortly to transpire.

How, instead of passing it by as the same old quarrel, I would have strained my ear to catch the least and last word which passed between Miss Gorham and her mother, one of those incipient days of my convalescence.

They were having it out in Miss Gorham's room with my door half ajar, so I could not help but hear something of what they said.

It was such an old song to me that it made but little impression, "going into one ear," as they say, "and out of the other."

But they were in dead earnest on this occasion, and of that there was no doubt. The theme was not new, but the passion of the two women was bubbling at the bottom and in a state of furious ebullition on the surface.

It was evident a crisis was near at hand and in so far as that affected me, I was not a disinterested listener.

I heard Mrs. Hodgkiss say to Miss Gorham: "Amelia, this affair must be settled and at once. I will not allow you to humbug us all any longer. The election is going to cost Colonel Custis a great deal of money. He can't afford to let Mr. Hodgkiss have any more money, and the poor man is perfectly helpless. He'll be ruined, ruined, ruined!" And here the old lady broke down and a scene of weeping supervened.

Then after a feast of crying, during which Miss Gorham was silent, the battle was resumed:

"You know, Amelia, what caused the death of your poor father. Mr. Hodgkiss is in utter ignorance of all that——" I had heard her say that a hundred times. "He will be terribly surprised if all this scandalous history gets out. And, Anna! What will she think, poor child?" And then another break down.

"You've got neither love nor pity for me, nor respect for yourself. You killed your father and your brother and now you would murder me!"

Of course this was a serious charge and one well calculated to arouse resentment in me for her who had been more than parent, if possible, and one whom an angel from Heaven could not have convinced me was guilty of such a heinous crime, or brutal intention. But I knew how figuratively women sometimes talk, and as politicians say, when they are discussing impracticable propositions of economy, I said to myself:

"Oh, I suppose such remarks must be taken in an academic sense, or at any rate, Pickwickian," and, laughing, I went on reading a trashy paper-covered novel, at the same time allowing the conversation, which consisted mostly of interjections and hysterical outbreaks, to pass through my head, taking each cutting remark at what I thought was its proper value, which was to say the least, a very low estimate according to my appraisal of a woman's quarrel.

But Miss Gorham evidently did not treat the accusation as lightly as I did, for she appeared to be greatly hurt, and said:

"You know better, mother. You know it was I who was wronged, and have been all these long years—that there was a terrible mistake——" and growing severely emphatic—"an awful crime committed which God will not much longer permit to remain concealed, nor will I submit to being made an accomplice in the detestable transaction any

longer. I won't stand it! I will not!" And then my dear, good friend, Miss Gorham, took her turn at the game of "high strikes."

"I never upbraided you for marrying Mr. Hodgkiss. I have always been obedient. All through the long years that I have suffered I have been as one dead to society and social pleasures. I have waited and waited to see Mr. Hodgkiss get out of debt——"

"But you won't marry Colonel Custis to save him and the rest of us from the poorhouse," interrupted the other.

"No, mother, and I never will."

This was a clincher. All the other firing seemed, compared to this, as a blank-cartridge fusillade. This fell like a solid shot and must have hit 'twixt wind and water, for it was followed by an ominous silence.

Then the dry, hard voice of Mrs. Hodgkiss came like a cutting blast:

"Have your way, Amelia. You disgraced the family once; with one blow you sent your father and brother to the grave; now finish your work by sending us all to the poorhouse and you will have finished the job to perfection. Talk about obedience! I would to God I had never borne you!"

I heard the stately footsteps of the enraged woman as she walked out of the room and I heard my dear benefactress scream:

"Mother!" and I ran in where she was, to find her on the floor unconscious.

I took her up in my arms and laid her on a couch,



and then fetching some water, bathed her face and temples until she came to.

I endeavored to find out from her the whole trouble between her and her mother, but she refused to have anything more to say about it then, assuring me that in a few days I should know all.

And still I did not attach much importance to it—a mere skeleton in the closet—a family secret which, when it came out would prove to be of more importance in its keeping than in its publication—in a word, any old resurrected ghost of bygone days, so it did not reflect upon the character of my dear Miss Gorham, and of that I was as far from thinking her guilty of even the least indiscretion as I would the fairest robed saint that knelt before the throne of God. And thus the days went by. But I was not right in my head. The accursed fever had upset me and I grew morose and crabbed as the autumn advanced, and strange notions ran through my brain, alienating me from my friends and suggesting thoughts of wickedness, and even deeds of violence.

## CHAPTER XXVI

My wounds were healed, the fever in my body was gone, but the fire in my heart and the fever in my brain were unallayed.

I saw at a glance how utterly impossible it was for me to live in this fashion. There, I think, was the source of the trouble, sitting up there in Mr. Hodgkiss' house, the mere plaything for a pure and blameless old maid, tied as it were to her apron strings, an idol in her boudoir and a scapegrace outside, my hands tied, my mouth gagged and an instinctive presentiment that I was created for better things—the fatality of egotism I suppose—if only I could be in some way transformed, and it was the utterly impossible realization of that transformation that, in my weak state of health, was fast driving me into insanity.

I needed no better example by which to weigh my emasculated powers than the inability to turn out and assist the Colonel in his doubtful canvass. For what purpose had all my schooling been?

With the finest periods of Demosthenes and Cicero at my finger ends; the loftiest passages of Shakespeare at my command and the highest flights of Milton on my tongue, I durst not say a single word in his behalf, or even in my own, while the

most ignorant and debased of men, soiled with the filth and vomit of the crossroad's bar-room, might not only vote against him but defame his honored name in public assemblies and in private parlors.

I had fought and bled for the glory of my country, to emancipate an enslaved people, themselves not Anglo-Saxons, nor altogether light of complexion, and still I was a slave, cursed with a curse from whose damnable obligation there was no power to absolve me and stained with a social crime that "all the sweets of Araby" could never wash away. And what had the American black man done to merit such opprobrium? What had I done?

"By God!" I said, "I will not endure this! If Nature is capable of producing such a monstrosity as I am, then, with a higher motive and a more benign heart I will crush out the miserable spawn by putting an end to it! I will kill myself!"

I think I was insane then, but I remember that is just the way I felt and I knew I was running mad.

In perfect health I had been able to overcome these attacks of depression, but I was weak now and my nerves, unstrung by the scourge of fever, began to give way. I ate little, slept less and walked much, tottering as I went.

My self control was going and I did not try to regain it. In fact, the strangest phenomenon of my aberration of mind, was a consciousness of double individuality. I was sure I was two persons.

I seemed to myself to consist of these two distinct persons—myself and another; the other man was the

active man. I appeared to be sitting off looking at the other's conduct in complete passivity, neither approving or condemning it, as one who dreaming the most ridiculous and wicked of things, sees no impropriety nor feels any culpability in his acts; or, like one who sees another doing wrong, and yet has no disposition to assist or guide him toward the right.

My old self was the slave and wore the chains that had tied my hands and feet and brain at my birth—that something more than brute but less than man—a Calaban without a Calaban's deformity, but still maimed, distorted and dehumanized by the oppression of caste.

The other fellow, a young giant possessing unlimited powers for good or evil, balked and waylaid, but struggling to be free—free to stand up among his fellows, like another stately pine with its brother in the forest, free to seek out in his own lawful way, and after his own fashion, the paths that lead to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and free to live, and if not free, then death—a disposition to do or die—to rise or fall, and if to fall, to carry his enemy to the ground with him.

And I, the old Jack of other days, sat there and saw Mr. John Custis, a young man of accomplished mind and perfect physical manhood, deliberately come to the conclusion to die; to utter the three fatal words: "I love you," and then perish by his own hand the same day, remembering his oath that not till the day of his death would he by word, look,



or deed give token of that venomous thing that had been stinging him like an adder for so many years.

A picnic was to be held at the trysting place in a few days.

It was to be one of those social gatherings so popular in certain parts of the South, held, it might be, in some shady grove, and if possible, convenient to the bay or seashore, where the people coming from far and near, assemble as one family, to enjoy a rest and recreation from the labors of the past season—the rich fruition of which they have already garnered in their barns or pocket-books and where those, aspiring to official positions to be conferred by the people, are wont to meet to shake the hand of their constituents and to jointly clash their blades in argumentative and forensic battle, while roasted oxen, barbecued fish and the daintier diet, prepared by the deft fingers of lovely woman, wait upon the good digestion of the hardy tillers of the soil.

"On that day, in the evening," said this Mr. John Custis, "I will take one last, long look at Julia, will tell her I love her, and walking down to the bay shore, will send a bullet crushing through my brain."

And I, Jack, the son of Sally, sat there and heard him say it, with neither ability or desire to impose an objection.

About this same time I received an anonymous note, demanding that I leave the county within thirty days, and in case I did not comply with the order, I would be taken from the house by force, and hung up by the neck to the first convenient tree.

Joe further informed me of the plot, and warned me not to venture out at night, and be careful to do nothing to arouse the vengeance of my persecutors. I could easily guess from whence these threats came, for I knew where the center of the storm cloud rested, and was never off my guard.

I did not fear Sharpe and his set in the open; neither did I care to be shot in the back by an assassin.

But even these machinations failed to alarm me. I was beyond that. I regarded them with the same imperturbability that I did the wild schemes of my other self that were to culminate in my self destruction.

Miss Gorham, with a woman's tactful vigilance, discovered my growing irresponsibility, and became alarmed. She tried to divert my attention.

I paid her small respect. The sense of obligation—I might say every moral sense—was for the time obliterated.

The smoldering fire of a lifetime—ambition fed by education and circumscribed by social laws—had at last burst forth like another Peleé, and that which in its aggregation deposes kings and disrupts empires, was about to rend me in pieces. It was natural. It was logical.

The human brain, iridescent with the blaze of enlightenment, can no more be enslaved, than a lion bound by a strand of silk to a spear of grass.

Pump gas into a balloon and it will ascend or burst.

I felt the straining of the cords that bound me; they were cutting into my flesh, and with the weight of a Sampson I must snap the withes.

Already I clasped the pillar of the temple of Caste and it had to tumble, even if I was buried beneath its ruins.

I walked about the house feverishly, sometimes quoting Shakespeare, sometimes declaiming for Colonel Custis as if on the hustings.

All the time my head ached incessantly, and drops of cold perspiration rolled off my face or protruded through the back of my hands, though I never dared to look at these same hands, any more than a man with hydrophobia dares to look upon water.

I took Joe out behind the barn—our old rendezvous, and told him all about my intentions. He did not realize that I was crazy.

I remember how the poor, honest fellow wept, saying:

"Don't do it, Jack! Don't do it!"

His lack of sophistry, his countrified innocence—even his sympathy enraged me. I thought, can this clown of a fellow be the beneficiary by mere matter of birth, of all the enfranchisements of a free country, be free to marry Anna Hodgkiss and founding a home, be permitted to sit down in the midst of his family, encouraged by the affection of a faithful wife and the comfort of offspring and I be a nondescript?

"Not do it? Not do it?" I exclaimed, "Fool, Dotard! How dare you attempt to give me advice?"

And saying this and many other abusive words that seemed to inflame my temper, as fuel does fire, I rushed at him clutching him by the throat with the fierceness of an enraged wild beast.

But in my weak condition I was no match for the brawny youth, and helping me up from the ground where he had tossed me, he led me to the cowbars, where he sat me down, and taking a seat beside me, with his arm still about my body, began to talk soothingly to me, going back in his conversation, to the old days of our boyhood, speaking of hunting and of Uncle Kiah and "Ruler" and of all the good times we as boys had enjoyed together until I laid my head on his shoulder and wept, my very soul full of the memories of the olden time.

His neck was very red where I had scratched it, and was bleeding a little, but he seemed not to mind that at all.

Afterward he led me to the house, saying as we walked along:

"There's nothing I wouldn't do for you, Jack, but some things are impossible, you know. I'd make you white if I could."

"Yes, impossible!" I remember repeating. "Impossible! Impossible!"

Miss Gorham met us at the door and put me in bed.

That night I was well nigh delirious—that is, my other self was, while in my sub-conscious existence I was as self-possessed as ever I was in my life, but utterly powerless to discriminate between right and



wrong, or to exercise any will power or judgment whatever.

Joe had filled me full of the past.

How late it was in the night, or by what motive induced I cannot tell, unless it was this infusion of Joe's, reminding me so vividly of Uncle Kiah and my quondam four-legged companion, then mouldering in the colored graveyard, I got out of bed and quietly dressing myself, crept stealthily from my room and down the stairs to the front door, which I noiselessly opened and passed out into the darkness, having left my hat and shoes behind me.

It must have been after midnight, for the Pleiades were past the meridian, and Sirius had long since gone down.

The moon on her last quarter had just risen over the bay, a mere thin rim of decrecence, affording but indifferent light, while that peculiar odor of the atmosphere of which the ghost in Hamlet speaks, was abroad.

I got over the fence and took the path through the fields—the same old path I had trod long years ago, behind Mammy Sally, toward the school house.

The fodder had been cut, but not stacked, and the bundled blades hung up on the ends of the corn-stalks looking like hooded spectres.

The cobwebs, wet with dew, that stretched across the narrow passway brushed me over the face at every step, and the clods hurt my feet.

I remember that I walked briskly, as if trying to get away from something that was oppressing me,

and somehow or other imagining I might accomplish my purpose by getting back there under the woods where my boyhood days had been passed, for ignoble and laborious as they had been, there was soothing in their recollection and compensation in their associations.

If I had been an Ishmaelite then, and subject to the wrath of my neighbors, I was a hunted stag now, at bay with my passions and at the mercy of unrelenting caste, which no ruse or device could ever foil or evade; and in my sore distress I would fain go back to the old days. Then I had not tasted of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, which had so fatally inspired me with longings, for which, contrary to every other law of nature, there was for me no answering counterpart.

But, alas, I had gone too far. The unrefluent wave of time had borne me beyond these halcyon scenes so far, there was no returning, and only shattered huts and tombless graves were left. Still, in my somnolent condition I was trying to get back—back to Uncle Kiah and "Ruler."

It all appears like a dream to me now—that wild flight across the fields—but a dream so realistic that I remember my surroundings as vividly as if it transpired a week ago—the stillness of the night before the dawn; the mist out on the bay; the shadow of the dark woods, and startling at first sight, the faint glimmer of a light through the window of Uncle Kiah's deserted cabin.

The time had been when I would not have ap-

proached that light for the world. But I seemed to be drawn irresistibly toward it, now.

"Surely," I said to myself, "it must be either Uncle Kiah's ghost or some belated hunters who have taken refuge in the hut."

I had been a hunter myself and without some interposition of Providence would soon be a ghost, and why should I be afraid of either?

As I advanced, the low nicker of a horse tied up in the thicket, outside the fence, suddenly convinced me that I need neither expect to find disembodied spirits inhabiting Uncle Kiah's old home or hunters, unless it might be hunters of men, so I slackened my pace and crept cautiously up through the rank weeds to the hut, and peeped in through the open logs.

I saw at once that it was filled with armed men, and among these, by the aid of a single tallow candle, I had no difficulty in picking out Mr. Watkins and Mr. Sharpe.

There was no reserve, either as to their manners or conversation. Some of them were smoking pipes and others chewing tobacco, with the same ease and sociability as if they had been at a country tavern.

But the theme they were discussing!

Why did it not fill me with horror?

How could I stand there and listen to the oath that swore my life away?

It was Sharpe who took the oath, and the time and place were the picnic at the trysting place, and the day after to-morrow.

Yes, it was then and there that I was to be shot to

death in cold blood, after the public exercises were over, and the shades of evening had fallen sufficiently to conceal the perpetrator of the deed.

Part of this interesting programme had been arranged previously to my getting there, but from what I actually heard, it was an easy matter to reason out by inference the whole plot; and as I had proposed to myself to do the same thing there seemed to be but small doubt of its accomplishment. However, as there is a difference between one's taking his own life, and another "removing" him, that is, between dying like a gentleman and being shot down like a dog, I made up my mind then and there to defend myself should I be attacked, to the best of my ability, and in either case, die game, as every true American ought to.

Whether these people had been out on a "lynching bee" or had met for the simple purpose of attending to my case I did not know, but their fretting steeds began to neigh out there, in the thicket and being unarmed I deemed it the better part of valor, to retire, and creeping back through the weeds to the field, I left them there to settle whatever matters they had in contemplation and sauntered over to the negro burying ground, my clothes getting soggy with dew and big drops of cold perspiration standing on my unprotected brow.

Arriving at that saddest of all places on God's green earth—a negro graveyard—I searched in vain, scratching in the damp grass for the spot where I buried "Ruler," and then walked over to Uncle Kiah's last resting place.



The fresh, red clay, ridged up between two planks, one at the head and the other at the foot, marked his grave. I took my seat on the shingle at the foot and gave myself up to the most solemn reflections.

Underneath my feet lay the last link that had connected the old civilization with the new; and sitting there as one who had, as it were, been a participant in both, it was natural for me to ask myself which was best.

To one with my experience there could be but a single reply, and it was this: "slavery with ignorance is better than freedom without equality."

The hand that struck the shackles from the slave dealt a cruel blow, if it indeed snatched a happy and protected servant from an indulgent master, and condemned him to the more degrading bondage of color and caste.

Uncle Kiah had been a philosopher, when he declared it was a crime to set the negro free without making him white—to give him liberty and leave him a victim to a tyranny worse than slavery.

So impressed was I with these thoughts that I gave myself up to the spirit of the past, which haunted so powerfully this bewitching spot, and shed bitter tears in remembrance of the days when with these, my dead and silent friends, I had tasted all of earthly happiness I had ever known.

All the attainments possible to education, all the glory won in battle and all the pride of a conscious manhood failed to sustain me in that dark Geth-

semane of my unhappy life. Sane or insane, I knew I was miserable.

Like the frightened and cowardly disciples, who fled the Master, so fled these boastful champions of human progress and individual uplifting, and so they will ever fly, presenting no defence against the mob, the oppressor or the mountebank, while the priceless boon of American citizenship depends upon "race, color or previous conditions," imposed by the sovereignty of irresponsible State government.

From the clump of green trees, now but a shadow, concealing a mansion over yonder toward the bay, the cocks were crowing for the dawn.

When their clarion notes should herald in another, that one would be my last.

"Sleep on, sweet Julia, and take thy rest!

"It has been foolish and vain to love thee, but it shall be sweet to die for thee!" I said, rising to go.

How I got back home and to bed again, without disturbing the family, I never knew. I only remember how bright was the day-star gleaming in the East, and how ruddy shone the streaks of coming day under the crescent moon.

## CHAPTER XXVII

WEAK from nervous depression and weary from loss of sleep, I did not get out of bed until nearly ten o'clock that morning.

Mrs. Hodgkiss had kindly saved my breakfast for me, but I could only take a cup of coffee and a bit of toast. Miss Gorham, they told me, had gone with Colonel Custis to see a traveling circus, and would not be home until night; and Anna had gone to spend the day with Julia.

I finished my scanty repast and went back to my room, suffering intensely with an unrelenting headache, and becoming more and more irrational; nor did I take any special pains to resist the delirium. I rather encouraged it. I yielded myself a willing victim to the most preposterous hallucinations and indulged all the fantasies of an opium eater.

I threw my coat on the floor, and in my shirt-sleeves and slippers danced jigs and caroused with the abandon of a drunken man, when really I could scarcely keep from falling to the ground from weakness.

Accidentally I saw that Miss Gorham had left the door, which communicated with my room, ajar, and with the *sang froid* of a professional burglar, I walked into her chamber and began to toss about

the paraphernalia of her bedroom with as much rudeness as if I had never felt, or had reason to feel the least bit of respect for her.

Needing a handkerchief, I pulled out a drawer of her bureau and began to rummage through a maze of a thousand and one articles which go to make up the sum of a woman's fancy, and coming to a roll of manuscript that continually tumbled down in my way, I caught it up and threw it out on the carpet at my feet.

I was about to leave it there, after I had finished my fruitless search, but stumbling over it as I turned from the bureau, I stooped and picked it up, and for want of something better to do, took it with me back to my room, and sprawling out upon the bed, proceeded to investigate it.

It was quite a large-sized roll tied with blue ribbon in an easy bow knot. I think but for that circumstance I should have thrown it away again, I was so weak, and continuity required such an effort. Even a house-fly was a burden.

Besides, there was nothing attractive about the yellow, faded foolscap upon which the thing was written, and it had the musty smell of age about it, notwithstanding all the lavender-like perfume it had absorbed in my dear Miss Gorham's chiffonier.

The manuscript itself was executed in a plain running handwriting, but evidently done in haste and began abruptly as follows:

"I am writing hurriedly. The law's avenger is on my track and a never-to-be-subdued remorse is



gnawing at my vitals. It is the first day of April, 1876. Fool's Day! I would to God, what I am going to relate were a frivolous student's joke instead of the horrid reality that it is.

"Were that so, the first beams of to-morrow's sun would dispel the gloom.

"But it is all too true, and the hideous tragedy will increase with time, and God only knows when the stain of this one deed of blood shall be removed from my accursed existence.

"Two years ago I came to Yale College, thanks to the indulgence of a kind parent, strong in mental and physical vigor, that I might become a lawyer, and returning to Virginia, add a new lustre to the already illustrious name I bear.

"I was beloved by my preceptors and petted by my classmates, especially was I on terms of closest intimacy with my room-mate, John Gorham, of Springfield, Mass."

"Ah, ha!" I said, "this is an old copy of some novel written by Miss Gorham, long years ago, founded on some family history of her ancestors. I will read on."

So I went on reading:

"Last Christmas a year ago he proffered me an invitation to spend the holidays with him at his father's house, which I, being far away from my own home, gratefully accepted.

"Being introduced to the family, I found Mr. Gorham, Sr., to be a proud, cold and austere man, formerly very wealthy, but now in moderate cir-

cumstances, he having sustained severe loss in some unfortunate speculative venture during the war, and I was cautioned by my chum to be careful not to speak of politics or the late unpleasantness between the North and the South, as Mr. G. was a decided hater of my people, as a class, and might give expression to sentiments offensive to me; so I was extremely respectful, and as to the forbidden topics referred to, ever on my guard.

"The other members of his family, not mentioning the son, consisted of his wife and a daughter, two years younger than myself, and three servants.

"The girl was one of New England's fairest daughters, and for me to see her was to love her even at first sight, and with all my heart and soul.

"During the week I spent in that bright and busy city my own heart was not only enslaved, but when I left with my companion for New Haven, I was not bereft, for I took another heart with me. The antipodes had met, and in Miss Gorham and myself the North and South were welded in one inseparable union of eternal affection—at least so far as we were concerned.

"Idolizing his sister, I loved more than ever the generous-hearted brother, and being, like her in many respects, he kept me in constant recollection of her own sweet self.

"The months were long that intervened between that first of January and the end of the session, in early summer, but we corresponded daily, while absence fanned into fiercer flame, the already de-

vouring conflagration so naturally kindled by youthful passion.

"Fortunately for me (I then thought), my dear sweetheart was projecting a visit to New York in June to her aunt's, and it was decided that I should meet her there on my way to my home in the South.

"The opportunity to see her again was a most delightful coincidence, and never was anticipation more gloriously realized.

"What cared we if it was the city's dull season; if there was no opera; no social fêtes. Enough to say, we filled that glorious fortnight to the brim, with love's sweet honeymoon, for we were clandestinely married, planning when we reluctantly parted, she for New England and I for Virginia, that at the end of my next session (at which time I should graduate), we would declare our marriage, and I would take my beloved bride to my father's house in the sunny South, where I knew she would be affectionally welcomed by the most indulgent of fathers, for my mother was dead.

"Alas! how little lovers are wont to calculate for the future!

"And, now, alas! within ten short weeks of the consummation of our dearest plans, we are both overwhelmed with dismay and ruin, the consequences of our indiscretion.

"How can I proceed to write of this horrid affair?

"Yesterday afternoon, while sitting in my room, preparing myself for an examination on the law of real property, my dear friend rushed into my pres-

ence, his features distorted, his breast heaving and his eyes glaring, and denounced me for the betrayal of his friendship, the abuser of his hospitality and the seducer of his sister.

"At first I was struck dumb, blind and motionless, while the incoherent curses of the boy I loved so dearly rang on my ear with a sound so discordant, I could not believe my senses.

"Recovering myself, and guessing the trouble had something to do with my marriage with his sister, I began to explain matters as best I could, assuring him there was some grievous mistake; that his sister was my lawful wife; that we could produce a marriage certificate, as well as the minister who joined us in holy wedlock, and that we were guilty of no greater offence than the indiscretion of a hasty and secret matrimony.

"I might as well have kept my mouth shut. A minim of oil dropped upon the surface of a raging maelstrom could not be more futile in calming the raging waters than my attempt to disarm him in his wrath by any explanation I might offer.

"Wholly unlike his Northern people, he refused to listen to reason, and gave vent to his passions with all the fiery impetuosity of a Southerner.

"He would neither heed or believe a word I said, but holding a letter in his trembling hand, which he had received that morning from his father, he accused me to my face of a cruel and dastardly crime, and demanded instant satisfaction.

"Raving like a maniac, and threatening to spring



upon me at any moment, his loud talk brought to our door, which he had in his blind temper left ajar, half a dozen students, occupying contiguous apartments.

"I abhorred such publicity of my private affairs, and arose to close the door, but he thrust me rudely aside, saying he wanted the whole world to know how degraded a villain I was. I still preserved my temper, trying every means in my power to pacify him, but in vain.

"'You Southern rascal! You spawn of a spurious chivalry! Nothing but your damned blood can atone for this! And that I will have right here on this very spot, unless you will meet me to-morrow morning on the field of honor.

"'You thought you could enter the home of a Yankee, as your ancestors did their negro quarters, and as you would a freedman's hut and debauch a pure New England girl as you would your unprotected slave, and not be answerable for the crime. You, who pretend to hold virtue so dear, and are so boastful of your gallantry—'

"'Hold! hold!' I said, my anger rising. 'I will not stand this!'

"'I will never hold until I taste your blood. You worse than cur! Will you fight me?'

"I told him he was my brother-in-law, my chum; and that I loved him too well to fight with him, and was about to plead with him on the score of old comradeship, when he rudely interrupted me, hissing between his teeth:

"'You coward! take that!' and slapped me in the face.

"The unpardonable insult, more than the sting of the blow upset my equilibrium, and if the bystanders had not interfered, sufficient gore might then and there have been shed to stay the tumult until sober, second thought should come as a peacemaker, and set matters aright.

"But such was not to be the case, and my blood catching fire at the thought of the abuse and degradation heaped upon me, I foolishly agreed to meet him the next morning before sunrise on the road toward Stony Creek, and to fight him with pistols ten paces apart, advancing and firing until one or the other fell, or five ineffectual shots each, had been exchanged.

"Such terms I knew meant death to one or both of us, and to kill him would be a far greater calamity to me than to be killed myself. But I was silly enough to be provoked into the duel, and I could not withdraw with honor, and there was nothing to be done but to fight it out.

"So, I lay down last night—yes, it must have been last night, though it seems to me an age—full of pity for my poor wife who, I understood had the day before given birth to a male child—hers and mine—born in honorable wedlock, but doomed to be fatherless whether I died or not ere the setting of another sun; longing to press both of them to my heart, but praying God I might never live to have the blood

of Bert Gorham on my hands, and tossing in my sleepless couch, bitterly thought of the coming day.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And now it is all over! I have slain him! Oh, God! how shall I ever forget that scene? How press out from my vision the pallor of his face as he lay dying there on the dewy ground?

"We left the city by daylight with two seconds, each, on the road indicated, taking a local train to Branford Station, and from thence passing through some woods that skirted the road on the South, we came out in a field from which we could see the Sound lying placid before us and crimsoned with the red of the morning sky.

"It was wrong to curse the sweet atmosphere of that Spring morning with a deed so foul; to send over those beautiful hills the crack of the murderous weapons we had brought with us; to waken so rudely the quiet hamlets that lay around wrapped in Nature's pastoral tranquility. But passion ruled the hour, and although I attempted even there to plead with Bert for my wife and child—he was deaf to all reason and we faced each other there—we, brothers-in-law—in deadly combat.

"At the word 'Fire,' I discharged my pistol in the air. His bullet hissed by my head like an envenomed snake. He advanced, taking deliberate aim at my heart. I fired. He reeled and his shot went wild, but mine had pierced his brain. He fell without a

gasp, his face upturned to Heaven and the red blood flecking his fair brow.

"I stood and gazed a moment as the pallor of death crept stealthily over his set features, and then turned and fled.

"A West-bound train was approaching the station. It halted and I leaped on board.

"I was careless where I sat. But on the seat in front of me was a woman bearing in her arms an infant that wailed at intervals for a mother's care.

"I knew the face of the nurse. I had seen her at Mr. Gorham's in Springfield.

"My suspicions were aroused. I moved forward and took a seat beside her. Oh, God! The story she told me! It was my own child!

"Its grandfather, blinded by uncontrollable passion, would listen to neither the voice of his sinless daughter, nor yet to that of conscience, or even human nature, had torn it from its mother's arms and was sending it to be farmed out in New York.

"Could cruel fate have plotted for me a more deplorable decree?

"Myself a murderer, flying from the dead body of my victim and the fierce minions of the law; and this my new-born child forced into orphanage under my very eyes.

"I scarcely knew what I did. I scarcely know what I am doing now. But I remembered my laundress—a good colored woman, I believed—and having been lately supplied with money from my dear father, I bribed the Gorham woman, and am



here in my laundress' house in New Haven with my precious charge, just on the point of leaving it and my country forever. For if I am captured by the police, God only knows what my fate will be; and if I should be exonerated how can I ever survive the remorse I shall suffer?

"I have paid this woman well——"

\* \* \* \* \*

I heard the grating of Colonel Custis' buggy wheels at the front door, a sort of flurry down stairs announced the arrival of himself and Miss Gorham, and in my demented condition, already tired of what I so strongly conceived to be a rather strained but well written piece of fiction, I hastily rolled up the scattered pages, retied them with the blue ribbon and placed the manuscript back again into my lady's chiffonier, and in five minutes had forgotten the whole transaction.

The dinner bell was calling me to tea—the last supper I should ever eat!

I put on my coat and went down stairs.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

I MUST have shown the condition of my mind in my face, for Miss Gorham evinced much solicitude at my appearance, and by her tenderness treated me as an invalid, asking me how I felt and if I had spent the day pleasantly, or if I had suffered from headache.

Every time she looked at me an expression of painful sadness overspread her countenance, and when she met me in the dining-room she smoothed down my hair with her delicate hand and kissed me sympathetically.

Colonel Custis stayed for tea. He was quite jolly and talked of the show. Miss Gorham was taciturn, seemingly anxious on my account, for I caught her frequently lifting her eyes from her plate to my face.

Mrs. Hodgkiss was dignified, but worried. First glancing at her eldest daughter and then at the Colonel, trying to read, I suppose, from the expression of their countenances what had transpired between them during the afternoon. Mr. Hodgkiss was quietly entertaining, slow of speech, but manifesting the pleasant humor of a good listener.

Joe was there at supper also, and divided in his bashful manner a *tête à tête* with Anna, who, knowing his embarrassment, seemed to take great pleasure in teasing him.

Toward the end of the repast the conversation lagged.

Miss Gorham had finished before the rest and had relapsed into a pensive mood.

The Colonel essayed to rally her.

"What are you thinking about, Miss Gorham, if I may be so impertinent to inquire?" he ventured good humoredly.

"I was thinking of that strange man we passed on the road this afternoon. He has occupied my mind ever since. I can scarcely think of anything else."

"Indeed!" remarked the Colonel, "how do you account for the impression? He seemed to me to be hardly more than an ordinary tramp. The country is full of them since the war. I do not mean an out-and-out hobo, but some fellow taking orders for trees, or a peddler of nostrums. We have many such now-a-days."

"You must pardon me, Colonel, but a woman's eye is keener than a man's."

"I suppose so," interrupted the Colonel, "when she is observing our sex."

"Perhaps the Colonel's attention was not especially directed toward the traveller just at that time," suggested Mr. Hodgkiss, with a twist of his mouth and a leer of his eye at Miss Gorham, in his plain but good natured manner.

We all laughed.

Miss Gorham said: "Pshaw!" reddened a little and went on: "You're mistaken, Colonel. That man wasn't a tramp. Did you not perceive a sort

of dignity about him? I think he was a foreigner, for his clothes were not made in this country. Besides, he walked with the stride and air of an aristocrat. He was handsome, too—that is, he was fine looking."

"That settles it," exclaimed the Colonel, straightening out his knife and fork across his plate. "I know now why he stood and gazed after us in such an interesting attitude. You were flirting with the fellow, were you?" in a bit of raillery.

"I am pleased to learn that Amelia is so susceptible. I had made up my mind long ago that she was incorrigible," put in Mrs. Hodgkiss with a touch of irony.

"But notwithstanding all your ridicule, I will still maintain that the man has seen better days, and if I'm not mistaken we'll hear of him again," persisted Miss Gorham.

"Perhaps he'll be at the picnic to-morrow," suggested the Colonel. "Who knows?"

And we all arose from the table.

Passing a sleepless, feverish night, I got out of bed next morning to hail a beautiful autumn day—the last I should ever see.

I had no appetite for breakfast, but took my seat at the breakfast table and pretended to eat, lest Miss Gorham should be unnecessarily alarmed at my conduct, and consequently by some means prevent my carrying out my purpose.

As it was, she did not disguise her solicitude, and coddled and petted me all the morning; and what



was more, entreated me to accompany her to the barbecue.

I noticed this the more, as on former social occasions she had never pressed me to be present, thinking, I always supposed, that my presence might be, as it certainly would have been, very objectionable to many persons.

I told her that possibly I might walk over there in the evening, intimating that it suited best my station not to obtrude myself upon people who did not want me; that God's sunlight was not created for my benefit and that it might injure Colonel Custis' cause were I to be at all a prominent figure on the grounds.

Finding that I was impervious to persuasion or argument, she took my promise to go for supper and come home with her after nightfall.

How could I lie to her thus—she who had been so kind and good to me?

"Never mind, Jack," she said as she pinned her hat. "This day, I trust, will end all your troubles and mine. I've made up my mind, and this agonizing farce shall this day end in a most pleasing comedy. You shall see *her* to-morrow, Jack, and talk to her. You'll get well then. You are nearer Heaven than you think."

Great God! What did Miss Gorham mean?

She did not see my face; she did not see me stagger backward to a seat, for she was following Anna out at the door.

I was dazed by her last remarks. I repeated her

words over and over again as literally as I could. I transposed them in every fashion, and the longer I dwelt upon them the more incomprehensible they became, until at last I sprang up from where I had fallen and gave vent to a storm of blasphemy such as I had never before so disgracefully indulged.

Was it that she had suspicioned my plans, was going to frustrate them and give me some counter-acting surprise? Had she heard anything from Julia—any message from her—any request? Oh, the utter fallacy of it all. Had forty thousand devils possessed me I could not have been more miserable.

It had the effect upon me of a mother trying to cajole with fairy tales a precocious child. It only served to aggravate me.

I say, I raved; I tore my hair, calling upon God to witness my unmerited suffering, my unjust punishment; and when my poor old Mammy Sally ventured into the room to see what the trouble was, her once black hair, now gray with years of care and toil, I cursed her, ungrateful, selfish wretch that I was, for bringing me into the world, and called her names I dare not think of, much less repeat.

I rejoiced that I had made up my mind to die, and hoped that by way of stimulation, instead of committing suicide, the end might come in deadly conflict with Sharpe, so that I might, in passing out myself, rid the world of another as equally unfit to live in it as myself.

In this mood I began in the afternoon of that memorable day to array myself in my best suit, taking

pains to carefully shave my face, curl my soft, brown moustache, and dress my abundant hair exquisitely.

I wore a low-cut waistcoat, Tuxedo coat, white neck-tie, checked summer trousers and patent leather ties.

I loaded my pistol carefully and deposited it in my hip pocket, and just after sunset sauntered slowly down toward the trysting-place.

By this time I was so drunk with nervous tension that I scarcely realized what I was doing.

I remember that I met many carriages driving homeward from the meeting; that the road was dusty and when I arrived at the place about twilight, the woods were very prettily illuminated with Chinese lanterns, and quite a number of people scattered here and there through the trees. I first strolled down to the bay shore, where a fresh South wind was blowing, and taking off my hat to cool my burning brow, I sat down awhile on the trunk of a fallen cedar, but not to rest.

My brain was whirling like the vortex of a tornado, and I soon arose and walked up to the grounds, a voice whispering in my dull ear:

"Tell her, Jack. You must tell her before you die. She'll never know it unless you tell her."

And I went on unsteadily, my legs tangled and my feet hitting against each other—went on looking for Joe and Anna—and Julia.

As I entered the grove I passed near the Colonel and Miss Gorham.

They were conversing seriously. Colonel Custis

pushing the ground with the point of his walking stick in front of him where they sat, and my benefactress leading in the conversation.

They were so much engaged that I passed by unperceived.

Then I came to a clearing in an out-of-the-way place in the woods, and there discovered the little party of three I was looking for. There were no lanterns in this part of the grove, but the spot was partially lighted up by the distant candles.

They seemed to be playing hide-and-seek among the myrtle bushes.

The girls were bare-headed and stood with tangled hair and glowing cheeks, startled from their game by my approaching footsteps.

"Ah, here comes Jack!" exclaimed Anna. "Poor fellow, he looks sick and weak. We'll let him stay, won't we?"

"I guess so," replied Julia carelessly. Joe was in hiding.

Disjointed as my faculties were, I remember to this day how lovely Julia appeared.

A wood-nymph could not have looked more spiritually beautiful.

Her golden hair was flowing to her waist; her round, fair arms, bare to the shoulders (for she had laid aside her light wrap); her white gown falling to her arched instep, giving her slippered feet free play; her bosom rising and falling like the waves of a summer sea. She was the picture of animated loveliness. In her presence, on that occasion, I felt



like one who has invaded the sacred precincts of some vestal temple where vulgar feet were not allowed to tread.

"Good evening!" I said. "You seem to be having a fine time."

"Yes, yes, excellent," replied Anna. "It's just glorious out here."

"Heavenly!" I ejaculated, throwing myself on the ground, resting on my elbow, and nervously drawing pine straws across my lips.

By this time, Joe, who had heard my voice, came up and joined us.

He also sat down on the ground, clasping his knees in his arms.

"How would you like to take a hand with us?" he asked, referring to me. "You and I'll play the girls."

"It might not be just the thing," I stammered.

"Pshaw! how foolish! We're all here to ourselves. You don't mind, do you, Julia?"

Miss Custis stood with her back toward us, nonchalantly plucking leaves from a sassafras twig.

"You three play," she said without turning her face. "I'm tired; I shall enjoy it just as much as if I participated."

"All right!" exclaimed Joe, leaping to his feet. "You go that way, Anna, and I'll go this, and Jack will try to find us." And with that they started off as innocently as children, leaving Julia and me together, alone.

There was a looped grapevine within the en-

closure, and Julia went over and seating herself into it began to swing herself.

I arose to my feet and went and stood in front of her.

Observing me, she put out her foot, resisting the motion of the swing.

She looked alarmed as if anticipating my intentions. I thought she was going to cry out for I could see the color come and go in her face and her hands quivered as she grasped the grapevine.

With a voice that was husky and unnatural enough, I know, I said:

"Julia?"

"Miss Custis, if you please," she replied, rebukingly.

I did not heed her, but repeated: "Julia?"

"How dare you speak to me thus?" she said, frowning. "You forget yourself. I have done nothing that you should take such liberty with me."

Then, as she slid to her feet and took a step or two, turning her back toward me, she laughed sarcastically, saying: "I think you are turning crazy since you came from the war."

I was too proud to throw myself at her feet. Besides, I feared if I should show any undue excitement or make any demonstration I should frighten her away, so I simply stood my ground and asked her if she would allow me to talk to her.

My respectful attitude seemed to reassure her, and she turned toward me and said:

"I've tried my best to avoid this. I have really

been obliged to treat you uncivilly, Jack, fearing you might forget yourself and insult me. I trust you will have enough consideration for my feelings and your own self-respect not to do it now. Your conduct is simply absurd. Please leave me, will you?"

"But I have never given you any cause for you to dread me, have I? Have I not always behaved myself in your presence? Think of——"

"Yes, yes; but——"

I saw she had betrayed herself, and I was emboldened to ask:

"Say!——" I began.

"No, no; I will not be catechised. I will not listen to you," she interrupted pettishly.

"Answer me but this one question," I broke in, "and I will leave you and forever. Granting our birthrights were equal, would it be an insult for me to tell you that I loved you?"

I saw that she trembled and was nervously endeavoring to frame an evasive reply. A few moments of silence and then she broke out:

"You have no right to propound such a question. You are saucy and impudent. If you do not instantly leave me I will call father and have——"

"Me punished." I finished the sentence for her. "You need not do anything of the kind." I said. "I have been punished all my life. I have loved you—oh, vain and foolish love, so long! I do not blame you. You have only done that which a woman's instincts have taught you. I trust you will forgive

me, for this night I die. Have you not one word of pity to offer? Will you not condescend to bid me good-bye?"

I saw she was about to scream, and turned on my heel to walk away, when I heard the sharp crack of a pistol, and feeling at the same time a twinge of pain in my right side, I fell to the ground.

I was not unconscious, but dazed.

I heard Julia shriek, and was aware of the presence of many persons who, alarmed by the report of the pistol and Julia's outcry, had come flocking to the spot.

I was sensible of a general hubbub; a scuffle in the bushes outside of the clearing; high words and oaths.

Then came Miss Gorham rushing in, followed by Colonel Custis.

"Look there! There's the man we saw on the road. He's fighting with those men," I heard her say. She had not seen me yet.

The stranger had two masked men by the throat.

"Let up! Let up!" one of them cried.

"We've done nothing but shoot that rascal, who was insulting the lady.

"We're going to lynch him. Let go!"

"Not on your life!" said the stranger, dragging the two men forward.

"My God!" exclaimed the Colonel. "It's Jack! They've killed Jack! See! There he lies!"

Then Miss Gorham, with a bound, threw herself upon me, clasping me in her arms, and screaming:



"Oh, my poor boy! They've shot my boy! They've killed my child! What shall I do? What shall I do? My son, my son, my own dear son!"

"What is she talking about? What is she saying?" asked Julia of Anna, as they both rested themselves on their knees at my feet. "I suppose she's really so excited she doesn't know what she is saying," she added.

"You're all foolish, deceived, dumber than cattle. I know what I am saying. This poor dying boy has been living in your midst all this time, and you've treated him like a dog, and there is not one among you who's got purer, better blood in his veins than he. And now you've killed him! My son, my dear boy!" raved Miss Gorham.

"Hadn't we better remove her?" suggested the Colonel. "She is endangering her own life with that of the young man."

"Oh, Colonel," she cried, "I was about to tell you all when the shot was fired. I am not insane. Jack's my son. You are his grandfather!"

"And I'm his father," came a voice from the outer circle. "Off with those masks! Off with them! or I'll smash both of you!"

"Yes, yes, Colonel, you wanted me to marry you, and you're a good man, but I couldn't marry my father-in-law, and Mr. Hodgkiss was in such a strait—Oh, my poor boy! He is dying! He is dying!"

"And I am Harry Custis—that boy's father. Oh, Amelia!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Oh, Harry!" echoed Miss Gorham.

"My long lost son! Heaven is kinder than I thought! If I have missed a bride, I have gained a family!" cried the Colonel.

At that moment a sudden great light dawned upon me.

The full import of the manuscript I had filched from Miss Gorham's bureau drawer, for the first time was completely realized.

I was no other than the child my father had committed to the hands of the colored woman.

The slight flow of blood from my new wound seemed to have brought me back to myself completely.

"Well," said Julia to Anna, "this beats me; I can't understand it all."

"Why I understand it," said Anna; "it's as plain as the nose on your face. Let me explain:

"Jack is Miss Gorham's son.

"That strange man there's his father, Harry Custis, Miss Gorham's husband, and the Colonel is Jack's grandfather.

"Don't you understand it now?"

I saw a ray of joyous light overspread Julia's face, then she bowed her head, and tears began to gather in her sky-blue eyes. I could not tell whether they were tears of joy or sorrow.

I whispered to my mother—my real mother—asking her to request Julia to come closer to me. Somehow or other I had no more doubt that she would stay away than I had that I was wounded.

Bashfully, she slid along, crawling up within reach of my hand, I stretched out my arm and grasped hers, looking intently into her face. The silken lashes of her eyes hid their lustre, for she was looking upon the ground.

"Darling," I said, "what may I call you now?"

"I—I think you might call me Julia, now," she stammered.

And repeating it after her I fainted away.

My would-be assassin was Sharpe, and his accomplice Mr. Watkins.

They were sent to jail by my grandfather, but as I shortly recovered from my wound, they were bailed out and a *nolle proes* entered by the Attorney for the Commonwealth. So much for public opinion.

My father, after his fatal duel, had fled to South Africa, and after amassing a large fortune there, left for the United States at the breaking out of the Boer war, trusting that when he arrived at home his unfortunate *affaire d'honneur* would have so far passed from memory as to permit him to live the remainder of his life in peace and serenity in the bosom of his family.

And now a few words anent the disposition of my friends, and I am done.

Fortunately, I am spared the gruesome task of immolating any of them on the altar of convenience, except those already passed away in the course of nature and by the stern demand of justice.

I therefore leave many living witnesses to testify as to the truthfulness of my narrative.

My good phlegmatic step-grandfather, Mr. Hodgkiss, after many years of failure, learned at last, by a sad experience to quit his scientific "farming," and learned to "plant" in good old Southern fashion. After this he began to make money, and is now out of debt, and his high-toned better-half soon realized that "one of the name is as good as the same," and she lives to ponder over and regret the unreasonable perversity of Fate that robbed her of a husband (Mr. Gorham having fallen dead in a fit of apoplexy a week after my birth), and a son, and imposed upon her innocent daughter, a trying widowhood of many long years.

My Aunt Anna and Joe are married and reside with the Hodgkisses, Mr. Watkins never having made up with his erring son. Like Ephraim, the old hide-bound relic of the past is joined to his idols. He must die and pass away like the influences under which he was born. Let him alone.

Time only can conquer prejudice.

My faithless and yet faithful colored Mammy, is still with my mother's people.

My father and mother are sojourning, for the present, with the Colonel.

Dear old gentleman, he was defeated not only in his courtship, but in his canvass also. But the consolations of a reunited family circle and the remunerative peacefulness of a good conscience are all his. God bless him!

His every wish is gratified, for he has no unreasonable desires.



"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

My strenuous friend—my philosophic adviser—my beloved Colonel, is he not President of the United States? and I myself, the happiest husband of the prettiest girl in all the land—sweet Julia Custis.

As for Sharpe, he went into politics, and is a member of the State Legislature, where he employs his precious time in concocting and framing "Jim Crow" and other kindred enactments for the preservation of that very select social circle of which he is a worthy and prominent member. And if there is really need for such things, and they be right, may God prosper him in his work. As for me and my wife, we shall soon leave Virginia for the South, where our lives shall be spent in an earnest effort to raise to a higher plane of social standing that unfortunate race of whom I was for many long and painful years thought to be one.

THE END.

