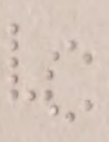
The Magic Box

Anita B. Ferris

THE MAGIC BOX

BY

ANITA B. FERRIS



Published jointly by
COUNCIL OF WOMEN FOR HOME MISSIONS
and
MISSIONARY EDUCATION MOVEMENT OF THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA
NEW YORK CITY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

A DOLLAR FOR COLLEGE

I

A DOLLAR FOR COLLEGE

"WHEW!" whistled Lincoln, "but this water am cold!" It was no joke to wade a creek in November, but in this corner of the South, where there were more Negro boys and girls than white, and where farms stretched for many square miles in every direction, there were very few bridges. The farmers, white and black, drove their carts and wagons, their mules and horses, and their automobiles, when they chanced to have them, right through the streams where they were shallowest. All the country folk knew where the fords were best and which roads to take in bad weather.

"Must 'a' been a right smart lot o' rain up country yesterday!" Lincoln leaned over to roll his trousers a little higher, and then, with one final dash which sent a shower of drops over him from head to foot, he ran up the far bank and threw himself down to dry his brown legs as best he could with his coat sleeve.

"I wonder," he said aloud, "did I git any water on Jim's book?" He pulled the strap from his shoulder and examined his old cracked slate and the battered reader on top of it. He wiped off a drop with the front of his coat. "I sure must git to school early befo' teacher, so she don' know I took this book. She never know I have this book for a week, but I sure *is* gwine to git in Jim's class! I kin read it better'n he kin now, and I's gwine to be in the top grade!"

With that, the boy jumped to his feet. As he did so, a tattered section of a mail-order-book fell from his hip pocket. He snatched it up quickly. "I don' want to lose this order book. Lemme see," he continued as he trotted off; "there's that piano that plays hisself. Georgie sure would like that. But how do hit play hisself? Teacher don' know. 'Pears like she don' know anythin' a boy wants to ask her." He turned the page. "An' a gran' floor lamp. Sis would like that. But how you light hit? Hit don' say. Anyway I ain't got no money."

Then his eye fell upon a row of young pear trees on the old Templeton plantation, —a leaf or two clung yet to the thin, brown branches. And, strange to see, each branch grew out of a cleft in a sturdy young trunk. The trunks had been sawed off at about the height of Lincoln's shoulders from the ground, split, and a piece of another tree inserted in each, bound, and glued in place. Evidently the strange branch had grown and put forth twigs and leaves. Lincoln remembered that "Old Man Templeton" had died and now his son had the place. Everybody was talking about the new fruit trees he was planting and the new and better cattle with which he was stocking the place.

"Crackey!" Lincoln exclaimed as he looked at the grafted pear tree. "I wonder how did anybody ever think o' that! If you kin make one kin' o' pear grow out o' nudder kin' o' pear trunk, why can't a apple branch grow out o' it? An' a nut branch, an' a persimmon?"

If it was a new idea and no one had ever thought of it before, might he not get a lot

of money for discovering it? Perhaps then he could buy the magic piano which played itself for little lame brother Georgie who made such beautiful tunes come out of the old, battered violin Uncle Ebenezer had given them—and the beautiful lamp for sister Car'line, who was a year older than Lincoln,—and—a new dress for his mother.

Then there was that wireless apparatus. How he would like to get words out of the air! He could do it for two dollars and a half, the order-book said. He studied the pages again as he walked along.

Suddenly he glanced up at the sun. He had forgotten all about school! He began to run in earnest over the hard, half-frozen ground. He had decided on a short-cut through the woods, when, far away and faint, he heard the sound of the school bell. He was late!

"Lincoln Roosevelt Hall!" exclaimed Miss Marty as Lincoln pulled open the rickety door of the schoolroom and stepped in. "Ain't you ashamed of yourself! Late to school! You've forfeited yo' seat fo' the

mo'nin'! You can sit on the flo' with the chart class."

All of the younger boys and girls were sitting on the floor around three sides of the room for the simple reason that in this little Negro district school there were not more than half enough seats to go 'round. Only the "big class," the fifth grade, had any desks. The fourth, third, and second grades had benches, while the unfortunate beginners, or chart class, and the first graders sat on the floor. Lincoln had always wanted a desk. When school had opened late in October, he had been promoted to the bench just behind big fourteen-year-old Jim Hobart, sharing his seat and the Fourth Reader with Sam Williams. It was a disgrace for an eleven-year-old boy to be seated with the little ones on the floor. Lincoln's face burned, under his dark skin. His sister Caroline, from the third grade seats, looked back at him reproachfully. Sam poked Elijah Moore in the ribs and giggled. Worst of all, big Jim laughed till his shoulders shook.

"I—I didn't mean to be late," stammered Lincoln. But Miss Marty only waved him down to the floor. It was not very comfortable there. The front supports of the little one-room school had sagged, so the floor sloped downward toward the door. The teacher's desk at the front of the room was quite up hill.

The little chart class children, who had neither books nor pencils, were amusing themselves by sticking splints and straws through the big cracks in the floor, dropping them down upon the ground beneath; while the first graders were whispering over the readers which they had to share together. Lincoln pulled out his slate and began slowly to draw upon it.

Suddenly he heard Jim's voice. The fifth grade was reciting. "I—I can't find my reader," stammered Jim. Lincoln rose tremblingly to his feet. He had forgotten the book! "I borrowed Jim's reader, please, teacher," he said in a low voice, as he passed it over.

"For what reason did you borrow it?"

asked Miss Marty. Lincoln hung his head. Must his secret come out before he could tell Miss Marty he was ready for the big class?

"Did you take that book home?" inquired the teacher.

"Yes'm," replied Lincoln.

"Don't you know the rules of the school? No book is to go home less'n it git lost or torn? We-all got books for only half of yo' chil'en, an' no money to buy more. We must have 'em to study here, and study *hard* ef we-all is ever to git an edication. Lincoln, I 'preciate your wantin' to study Jim's book, but you have broke the rules an' you will have to sit on the flo' the rest of the day."

Lincoln turned back slowly to his corner. How could he ever get into the big class now? Then a suppressed giggle caught his ear. He looked up resentfully. Elijah Moore had fished the long bit of mail-order book out of his pocket and with his pencil stuck through it, was crouching under it as if it were an umbrella.

The boy forgot where he was, forgot all

the other pupils and the teacher. "You gimme that book, 'Lija Moore!" he cried, springing forward. As he did so he caught his foot in the leg of the bench and fell headlong upon the grinning Elijah.

There was a shout of laughter, and the boys and girls half rose in their seats to see what had happened.

And then the rickety door opened, and on the threshold stood two strangers, a white man and a Negro.

The laughter stopped in the middle, and the children dropped shyly back into their seats.

Lincoln left the torn fragments of his precious mail-order book on the floor and crept back to his place in the corner.

"Order!" called Miss Marty, sternly, and the boys and girls turned startled faces toward the front of the room.

"Will you be pleased to enter?" asked Miss Marty of her guests.

"Thank you," replied the strange white man. "May we visit your school? My name is Copeland. I am visiting all of the

colored schools in this county; and this is my friend, Mr. Leland, who has just graduated from an agricultural college in the North. He is helping me in my school visiting."

A Negro man a college graduate! Lincoln stared with the other boys and girls.

Miss Marty curtsied deeply. "Please to come forward," she said. And then, since there were no chairs in the room except her own, Sam and Elijah carried up their bench.

"Now, boys and girls," said Miss Marty nervously, turning to the children, "we will have some questions. Kin yo' tell these gentlemen what is the capital of the United States?"

"District of Columbia!" answered Jim promptly.

"Washington," whispered Lincoln, beneath his breath.

"District of Columbia," echoed the big class, the only one that had a geography to study.

And then followed a series of crushing

mishaps for everyone. Lillian Holt went to the blackboard—it was made only of boards painted black—and wrote "4 + 5 = 8." Billy Simmons got stuck on four times six and had to count very slowly on his fingers. Then came a test in reading for all the grades. Little Adelaide Higgins read the entire lesson in her Second Reader with the book upside down. It sounded all right, and Lincoln hoped the visitors did not notice. Finally, after many halts, came the turn of the fourth grade. Everyone stumbled, and Sam became quite hopelessly confused. Oh, if Miss Marty would only let him take his place in line, thought Lincoln! He, who was the best reader in all the school, might redeem himself and let this strange young man from college know that their school was worth something after all. Beseechingly he looked at the teacher, but she never once glanced his way.

Finally the visitors rose to go. "I'm sorry," said Miss Marty, "but it hasn't been a good day to-day. The chil'en mostly tries, but we-all have school only five months a

year so we can't learn like those who has nine months."

"But why do you not keep school longer?" asked Mr. Copeland.

"There isn't money to pay a teacher longer, an' the chil'en has to stay home to work durin' the crop. Their folks are poor. An', gentlemen, as you-all can see, there are books enough for only half the chil'en an' we has only *one* geography. There ain't seats enough, an' there's desks fo' only eight."

"I am sure you have done well under such handicaps," answered the gentleman.

"May I speak to the children?" asked Mr. Leland.

"Proud to have yo'," answered Miss Marty.

"I just wanted to tell the boys and girls about some of the schools they may wish to go to after they have graduated from this one. Any of them may go if they are willing to work." And then he told them about the mission schools which had been provided for Negro children like themselves;

about Tuskegee and about Hampton, from which school he himself had graduated before he went to the agricultural college. Here one could learn to become a tradesman, to build a house, to make furniture, or to become a skilful farmer or dairyman. A girl could learn to be a teacher or a dressmaker. Best of all, these schools prepared boys and girls to be leaders and helpers wherever they went.

Lincoln listened breathlessly, and then, forgetting the disgrace of the morning, he raised his hand. Mr. Leland nodded.

"Please, suh," he said, "do dey graft trees at these schools?"

"They certainly do," answered the stranger.

"An'—d—did any one ever graft onto th' one tree a pear an' a apple, a nut branch an' a cherry an' a persimmon?"

Miss Marty was staring at Lincoln as if she thought he had lost his mind, while smiles were coming to the faces of the children.

Mr. Leland slowly shook his head. "No,

I never heard of a tree grafted in that way."

"But—but wouldn't it be a wonderful tree to have?" continued Lincoln.

"It would be a very curious tree," admitted Mr. Leland, "but I am afraid it would hardly pay to graft trees in that way, if it could be accomplished. They wouldn't bear enough of any one thing."

"Oh," said Lincoln, while a titter ran around the room.

And then the guests bade them all good-by.

All the miserable afternoon Elijah and the other boys asked one another if they had heard of the wonderful tree Lin had invented. A strange and peculiar tree appeared on the blackboard and was copied on slates around the room.

As soon as school was over, Lincoln darted across the fields. He would stand no more! At the ford he suddenly stopped, for he heard voices and then a great splashing. Some one was in trouble.

One glance was enough. The swollen cur-

rent had washed the landing away from the opposite bank and the stream was rough and turbulent in the middle. The buggy of the visitors stood midway in the creek, and the horse was rearing and plunging. A front wheel disappeared and the water entered the wagon body.

"Stiddy!" called Lincoln from the bushes on the bank. "Hol' him stiddy! You-all can't go fo'ard." And with a splash the boy jumped into the stream and waded toward the horse's head.

"Stiddy, boy! Stiddy thar!" he coaxed as he had talked to his father's old mule at home. Once he stepped into a hole, himself, and sank up to his arms. At last he had the frightened horse by the bridle and was slowly backing him. "Stiddy, boy!" he soothed as the horse calmed down. "There, Mister," he concluded, "you can turn him now, an' drive out up that a-way."

"Well, my boy," exclaimed Mr. Copeland, when they were on land once more, "you have saved us a ducking and perhaps more serious trouble, for it looked as if Dick,

here, might break a leg in one of those treacherous holes we couldn't see."

Lincoln's teeth were chattering as he stood in his wet clothes.

"Here, where do you live?" continued the man.

"On t'other side of the creek, but you-all will have to drive down to the main road," replied the boy.

"All right, we will take you home. It must be on our road anyway," replied Mr. Copeland.

"Why, weren't you in District School Number 4, that we visited this morning?" questioned Mr. Leland, as he wrapped the lad in the warm lap-robe.

Lincoln nodded and hung his head. And then, somehow, as he rode along with the two men, the whole story came out. "An' I sure *kin* read that Fifth Reader," he declared, "an' I aims to be in that grade ef th' teacher would only let me try."

"I wonder if we couldn't ask her, when we write concerning the Institute?" questioned Mr. Copeland.

Mr. Leland nodded.

Lincoln's eyes sparkled. "Do you reckon, Mister Leland, that I kin go to college?"

"Of course," answered Mr. Leland.

And then came the story of the pear tree. It was not so foolish after all, for both men knew of a man who had discovered how to grow seedless oranges and strawberries and, indeed, had made a new fruit entirely by grafting.

" 'Deed I'd like to make a new fruit grow!" exclaimed Lincoln as they drew up in front of his home.

"Here's best wishes for your enterprise," and Mr. Copeland left in Lincoln's palm a round silver dollar.

Lincoln had never had so much money before. The boys could not make fun of him now! He was going to college!

A RIDE FOR THE DOCTOR

II

A RIDE FOR THE DOCTOR

"COME, honey, time to git up!" called Lincoln's mother softly.

"Yes'm," answered the boy sleepily.

"Come!" repeated his mother.

Lincoln sat up in bed, dizzily, and looked around. Where was he? Surely this was not home. Georgie was sound asleep by his side, while wedged across the foot of his bed in the small room was another bed where Caroline was still sleeping, and in which his mother had slept. The air was heavy and stuffy. In the house next door, so near that it seemed the next room, a baby was crying, and on the other side of the house a man was quarreling. They had no neighbors at home; where was he? Lincoln's head was already aching, but it ached harder as he tried to understand. Oh, yes, now he remembered. His father had gone up North to work, when the crop had failed and their landlord had raised the rent of the little farm. They had sold the old mule and the

chickens, and Mammy and sister Caroline, little lame Georgie and Lincoln had come to the near-by town to live while they waited for Pappy "up No'th" to earn the money to send for them all.

The smell of bacon came through the kitchen door. Slowly Lincoln drew on his coat and shoes. It was nicer back in the old country home. There they had two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a lean-to. Morning-glories grew over the little weather-beaten back porch, and sun-flowers in the garden. Here, there were but two rooms in the little shack they had rented, and the alley was close packed with families. Lincoln still felt shy among them.

"Come, son," sounded his mother's voice again from the kitchen, "hit's most five o'clock, and you'll be late fo' yo' work."

And then Lincoln smiled in spite of his headache, for had he not been driving the milk wagon nights and mornings for old Mr. Simmons the whole month they had lived in the town? And to-day was pay day. He would receive five dollars, and his mother

had promised him that one whole dollar he might keep for himself for his education.

He walked over to an old wooden chest which stood in one corner and in the half darkness pulled out a small, blue tin box. Something in it rattled. Yes, it was safe, that one precious silver dollar the man from the North had given him four months ago. Only a little lamp-light shone in from the crack of the kitchen door, but Lincoln felt the cold silver between his fingers and rubbed the date; 1912—he knew it! Then he pressed the coin against his forehead. It felt good there.

"Lincoln!" called his mother again.

"Yes, mammy, I'm a-comin'!" he answered as he went into the kitchen.

"Now, son, git yo' water and wash."

Lincoln picked up a pail and went out of the door, half way down the alley to a faucet from which three women were drawing water for their morning cooking. They were so long about it that he feared he would be late for work, and so he hurried back to the kitchen.

"Too many around, Mammy," he laughed. "Guess I don't git washed this morning."

"Well, maybe you git your chanct when you go past to work. Here's yo' breakfast, son."

But Lin could nibble only a little at the corn pone and bacon; then he snatched his cap and ran out of the door.

At noon, when Lincoln and Big Rastus who carried the milk bottles into the houses while Lincoln drove the mule, drew up to the station, Mr. Simmons called to them: "Rastus, you take the mule to the blacksmith shop to be shod; and you, Lincoln, call for him after school and bring him out to the farm. Rastus, here's your money, and Lin, when you bring the mule up tonight, I'll give you yours."

"All right, suh," Lincoln answered. His money at last! If only his head did not ache so, how happy he would be!

"Lincoln, Lincoln Hall! Are you asleep that you don't hear me speak to you?"

Lincoln raised his head with a jerk and

looked at the teacher. The light from the long, uncurtained windows, which he faced, dazzled him, and the room seemed very warm from the red-hot iron stove in the corner.

"Yes, mum," he answered.

"How much is five times eight?"

"Five times eight—five times eight!" Had he been asleep? He could not tell, but he was sure he could not remember the answer.

"Next!" called Miss Johnson. "Lincoln, you surely will lose yo' place at the head of the class if you don't pay attention."

Lose his place! Lincoln looked down in a dazed way at the desk he had been so proud of, even if he did have to share it with Bill Andrews and Mose Wheatley. The seat was meant for only two, but when Lincoln came, late in the winter, they had squeezed him into the middle. No children sat on the floor in this school, but there were three boys and three girls in every seat for two in the grade, and there were twice as many Negro boys and girls in the town as there

was room in the old school building, so half of them came to school in the morning, and half in the afternoon.

Five times eight! The question had long ago been answered, but Lincoln's head ached so that he could not remember what it was. Anyway, teacher was going very fast over their number work, for the school year of the Negro children was two months shorter than that of the white boys and girls, and yet they were expected to cover the same ground.

At last school was over, but Lincoln stood still in the doorway. What was it he had to do? Oh, yes, get the mule and take him out to Mr. Simmons' farm. The ground had a queer way of swinging up to meet him as he walked, and he had a sudden bad pain in his throat. At the shop he heard himself ask of big Aaron, the colored blacksmith, "Is Mr. Simmons' mule ready?"

"Here he is," replied big Aaron. "Ain't yo' got eyes to recognize yo' own mule, boy?"

Shakily Lincoln put his foot into the

looped-up trace by way of a stirrup, and climbed on Scott's back. Sleepily he rode along through the outskirts of the town. If only he could take one little nap, just five minutes, he felt sure he could ride the rest of the way to the farm. Just where the lane to the Simmons farm entered the road which led in to the town, stood a rickety, abandoned shed. As Lincoln swayed in his saddle, his eyes fell on the hay.

"Whoa, Scotty!" he called hoarsely. "We'll just rest a little minute here—I reckon," and half falling off of the mule's back, he crept into the shed and threw himself down on the hay.

The sun was sinking behind the hills. Over the fields from the "big house" of the Randolphs' came Caroline, swinging the empty blue laundry bag in which she had "toted" home the wash for her mother.

"My landy!" she exclaimed, as she climbed the fence into the lane, "what's dis yere mule doin' here all by hisself? Ol' man mule, what yo' doin' here?" she inquired as she stroked his nose. But old

Scott was quite content with his feed, and as he reached for another mouthful, she glanced down and saw Lincoln huddled up on the hay.

"Why—why—*Lin!*" cried Caroline. "What are you doin' *here?*"

Lincoln opened his eyes, sleepily. "I—I was takin' the mule home—to Mr. Simmons."

"But git up, Lin, it's gittin' night!" exclaimed Caroline. She took hold of his shoulders and pulled him to a sitting position. "What is the matter with you-all?"

"My throat hurts," answered Lincoln thickly. He tried in vain to stand. "You take the mule home, Car'line, I can't."

"Yo' sick!" exclaimed Caroline in a frightened whisper. "You got to go home, Lincoln. Here, I'll help you," and she pulled him to his feet.

Dizzily, Lincoln leaned against the post of the shed. "I—I guess I can't go, Sis," he whispered.

"I'll take yo' home on the mule," Caroline decided finally.

"No—no, take the mule—to Mr. Simmons," objected Lincoln. "I—I gits my pay to-night."

"But how I gits yo' home?" questioned Caroline, anxiously. She looked out of the shed. There were only the homes of strange white people around them. She did not know any of them. "Mammy, mammy!" she half sobbed under her breath. But her mother, she knew, was somewhere at the other end of the town. She was to cook supper for a white family and would not be home until nine o'clock that night. Caroline looked back at her brother. He had sunk down again with his head against the side of the shed. He must be very sick. If only there was some doctor near! But Caroline had heard of none at all since they had lived in the town. If she could but get old Dr. Moulton, who had always given them magic medicine to stop their chills and fever. Why not—why not go to Dr. Moulton? Perhaps he could give some medicine which would cure him right away. But could she leave Lincoln alone in the shed?

Caroline considered. No, she must take him with her.

"Come, Lin," she ordered, "you git up on the mule. We's gwine to Dr. Moulton's."

Lincoln half opened his eyes. "We got to take the mule back—to Mr. Simmons."

"Yep, I knows," answered Caroline soothingly. "But first, we-all goes to the doctor's. Git up, boy," and leading Scott to the side of the fence, and half dragging, half pushing Lincoln, she managed to get him on the mule's back, and then to scramble up herself behind him.

Anxiously Caroline dug her heels into the old mule's sides. With one arm about her brother's waist she steadied him, while with the other hand she held the looped-up reins. If the mule trotted, she was afraid Lincoln might fall off.

Soon they were passing down the familiar road which led to her old home. She looked at the sky fearfully. There was only a glow left over the hills and the dark clouds hung low. Ere long it would be entirely dark. "Git up, Scotty," she urged. "Git up!"

Down in the hollow was the old cemetery. Back home Uncle Scipio said there were "ha'nts" in the cemetery, which was Uncle Scipio's name for "ghosts." But the minister in their old church had told them there were no "ha'nts." Still Caroline looked anxiously down the dusky road. "Is you afraid, Lin, of ha'nts?" she whispered. But Lincoln, his head resting heavily against her shoulder, appeared to be asleep. Should she turn back? But she must take her brother to the doctor. The minister said there were no ghosts. Nearer and nearer they came to the cemetery lot. Caroline could see the white tombstones gleaming through the dusk.

Suddenly old Scott reared and plunged ahead, almost throwing them off his back. Grasping desperately at the reins, Caroline caught sight of a billowy white object rising from the side of the road.

"Scotty!" she screamed and dug her heels into his sides. But old Scott needed no urging. He galloped heavily ahead, and never slackened his pace till they came to the ford.

Her heart beating hard, Caroline glanced fearfully back. Was the ha'nt gaining upon them? There was the same white object, far in the rear, flapping in the wind against the old board fence. "Nothin' but a big white poster!" exclaimed Caroline.

"W-what?" asked the frightened Lincoln.

Caroline laughed. "The Pa'son was right, Lin, there *ain't* no ha'nts."

Now they had come to the woods. Caroline heard the sound of galloping hoofs behind them, and, before she could tell what had happened, a stern voice exclaimed "Whoa!" The old mule halted so suddenly that he threw up his head.

"It seems to me," continued the voice, "that I recognize my mule. What are you doing with it out on this road?"

"M-mister Simmons?" stammered Caroline.

"Yes," answered the voice. "What have you to say for yourself?"

"Oh, Mr. Simmons, suh, Lincoln here, was takin' yo' mule home an' he got so sick he couldn't go, so I'm takin' him to Dr.

Moulton's an' then I was goin' to bring the mule home."

"So that's the story!" Mr. Simmons rode close and peered into Lincoln's face as he lay with his eyes closed again, against Caroline's shoulder. "Well, it looks as if it were true. Where does this doctor live?"

"Jes' on a little piece," answered Caroline.

"Then let me help you," and Mr. Simmons took the reins from her hands. "Now all you have to do is to hold your brother."

"What's the trouble, Doctor?" asked Mr. Simmons, as the old man straightened up from his examination of Lincoln.

"Diphtheria," answered Dr. Moulton shortly. Then he turned to the girl. "Where do you live now, Caroline?"

"Higgins Alley, suh," she answered.

"Humph!" answered the doctor. "I know that alley. Packed full o' niggers from end to end, closer than you pack sardines in a box. Suppose there's one spigot of water for the whole street?"

"One fo' every few houses, suh," said Caroline.

"Humph!" ejaculated the doctor again. "And I suppose Lincoln's been goin' to that fool school where they pack 'em three in a seat?"

"Yes, suh," answered Caroline.

"And he's been delivering your milk, Simmons, and I suppose his mother washes for the town."

"Yes, suh," answered Caroline again.

"Well, Simmons, you can see how a nice little epidemic can start in that alley and just naturally spread through all the white homes in Belton."

Mr. Simmons nodded slowly.

"I've been telling your fine town doctors for the past ten years that Higgins Alley was a disgrace to 'em. I ought to send this boy right back there and let them take the consequences, but I won't. There's no Negro hospital in this town, and no district nurse to send to 'em! Well, let me see. It just happens that my coachman, John, has moved out, and there are some pretty good

rooms up in the barn—good and comfortable—and Marthy in the kitchen is pretty good-natured about cookin' food. I guess that's where I'll put the boy. You'll have to stay with him, Caroline, since you have been pretty thoroughly exposed. How would you like to act as trained nurse?"

"An' wear a white cap and apron like I've seen, suh?" Caroline's eyes shone.

"Shouldn't wonder," smiled the doctor.

"Oh, suh, I'd love to be a nurse mo' than anythin' in the world!"

"Well, I guess you will have a chance until I can get your mother and brother out here, and judging from the way you brought Lincoln to me, I imagine you will make a good one."

"I'll stop in the alley and tell their mother," offered Mr. Simmons, adding, "Oh, yes, Caroline, this belongs to your brother," as he dropped a five dollar bill into her lap.

The soft spring air was blowing in through the window of his room in the barn

loft, when Lincoln first sat up after his long illness.

"Son," smiled his mother, "I guess I don' fo'got to gib you this befo'. Hit's from yo' month's wages, what I promised yo'," and she held out a round silver dollar.

Lincoln reached out his thin brown hand eagerly. "Anodder shiner fo' my education! Oh, Mammy, I sure *is* gwine to college. Where's the blue box? Let me hear it jingle with the odder!"

UP NORTH

III

UP NORTH

"THAT will do, Lincoln. You may sit down," said the teacher.

Lincoln was conscious as he finished reading, that a subdued titter ran around the room. That was the way these strange Northern boys and girls had laughed every time he opened his mouth. Now they laughed softly and secretly, since the teacher had sternly checked them. He knew they were making fun of him because of his Southern accent, and even the eight or ten other Negro boys and girls in the room joined them. He bit his lips to keep the tears back. What was the good of his beautiful, beautiful shining desk all by himself, of the lovely warmth which came from no hot iron stove, but yet seemed to fill the whole room; of the beautiful pictures on the wall; of the real blackboard, if there was no friendly face except that of the teacher?

He looked shyly up at the teacher. She was a white woman, the first white teacher

he had ever had; and this was a school for white boys as well as black. There were no schools like that in the South.

Many of the boys, too, were different from any white boys Lincoln had ever seen before. Donald Bliss, a colored boy, had whispered to him at recess that the fathers of Dominico and Tony were Italians, that Stephane's father was a Greek, and that big John was the son of a Bohemian.

The teacher was speaking again. "Will Lincoln Hall please remain for a few minutes after school?"

In the quiet room Lincoln looked up timidly into the face of his teacher.

"Lincoln," began the teacher, "I think this grade is a little too hard for you yet."

"But I was in the fifth grade at home, ma'm," answered Lincoln, the tears beginning to come into his big black eyes. Was he to be banished from this beautiful room after all?

"Still, your school never lasted so long as our school does, Lincoln, and you had other handicaps, too. Well," she concluded

slowly, "I'll try you for a few days. A boy with your name, you know, ought to be able to accomplish anything. You remember Lincoln had to work very hard for his education when he was a boy."

"But—but he was a white boy," answered Lincoln, shyly.

"Black boys have done as much," she replied.

Had they, indeed! Lincoln walked proudly to the door. He would just show teacher and all of them that he could stick in that class!

Out on the playground the boys of the fifth grade were building a huge snow fort, which they had topped with a flag. Black boys and white were working together. Would they let him play with them? Big John was just hoisting up a huge block of snow to the top of the fort. "Here, Coon," he called over his shoulder to Lincoln, "you can make the ammunition!"

In spite of the unpleasant name, Lincoln smiled as he walked over to the fort and began making snowballs with his bare hands.

"I'm going to be captain of the fort," exclaimed Dominico dancing up and down.

"No, me," answered big John roughly. "I guess I built it!"

"But I made de plans and helped," answered Dominico hotly.

"Well, you ain't goin' to be captain," replied John.

"All right, then see what will happen to yer old fort," and reaching behind Lincoln, Dominico gave a push which sent John's newly balanced tower and Lincoln together tumbling to the ground.

John turned upon him in a rage. "You knock down my fort!" he exclaimed, doubling up his fists.

"Naw, he did it," laughed Dominico, pointing to Lincoln rising from the snow.

"Let's wash his face!" exclaimed Tony.

"I'll show him!" yelled John.

But Lincoln was frightened. He had never been in a snow fight before, and he flung out wildly with his arms striking as hard as he could, for he was sure he was going to be smothered.

Good-natured Donald Bliss, standing behind him, at this moment heaved a soft block of snow from the fort upon the necks of the boys who were doing the washing.

"Aw, quit!" exclaimed John, fishing down his back.

"Let's run the coons off!" called a white boy.

The cry was taken up. "Let's have a snow fight."

In a second the colored boys found themselves alone, while the white boys were pelting them with snowballs.

And then the battle began in earnest. The Negro boys were far outnumbered. They fought pluckily, but inch by inch they were driven out of the playground and along the street. A well-aimed ball from Donald Bliss knocked John's cap off. Angrily the big boy picked up a hunk of ice and threw it with all his might at Donald. He ducked, but it struck Lincoln full on the cheek bone and, stumbling sideways, he fell, the blood trickling from a wide gash in his cheek.

"Aw, cut it out!" exclaimed Dominico,

running toward Lincoln. "He didn't knock yer fort down anyway. I did," and the Italian boy faced the other white boys defiantly.

"I should think," said a clear voice, "that since both sides fight so pluckily, you could *together* win any sort of battle."

"Miss Oliver!" gasped Donald Bliss.

"And now," continued Miss Oliver, "I think the first thing is to get this cut dressed."

The boys hung their heads in silence.

"Will you come with me?" smiled the lady as she bent over Lincoln.

The boy looked up in her face with round eyes.

"Are—are you a police lady, missis?" he questioned.

The woman shook her head and smiled at him. "I am just a friend of boys," she answered, as she helped him to his feet.

In a few minutes Lincoln found himself in a big, warm building. He looked about him with wide eyes. In a long, sunny room numbers of little Negro boys and girls were playing a merry kindergarten game. In

another room tables were being laid with food for them. In a third room some big colored boys were laughing over a game of dominoes. From somewhere up-stairs came the sound of music on a piano. "Please, ma'm," asked Lincoln, "where is this?"

"It is just a big, friendly church home kept by the Mission Board for all the colored people of this neighborhood," answered the lady.

"I think it's heaven!" answered Lincoln with a sigh of comfort.

In a neat little office, while the lady dressed his cut, Lincoln poured out the whole story; how his father had been sick with a bad cough this winter and had to stay home from work many days; how they lived on the top floor of a rickety old building so close to the elevated railroad that the cars seemed to thunder through their rooms night and day; how sister Caroline wanted to go back home down South where the morning glories grew in the summer over their little cottage and the hollyhocks and sunflowers stood in the garden; and little

lame Georgie was afraid of the dashing automobiles and cars, and cried all the time with the cold; how Mammy knew no families to wash for in this strange city; and, last of all, about the old blue tin box and the two silver dollars in it.

"But ef I has to spend the money fo' grub, then I can't go to college ever," he concluded sadly.

"Oh, I guess you won't have to do that," comforted the lady. "I think we can help you out. Just come over to this next office with me. Mrs. Trowbridge," she asked of the lady at the desk, "have you any one who wants washing done?"

Mrs. Trowbridge glanced down her page.

"Certainly," she replied, "here are several families on my list."

"Anything for a boy?" continued Miss Oliver.

Mrs. Trowbridge considered. And then she nodded. "Yes," she answered. "Old Mrs. Hedges wants a boy to run errands every Saturday afternoon. She will pay fifty cents."

"How will that do, Lincoln?" questioned Miss Oliver.

Lincoln's eyes sparkled. "Maybe sometime," he replied, "I put another dollar in that box!"

"Shouldn't wonder," smiled Miss Oliver. "And now, Lincoln, tell your mother I will call on her to-morrow morning about the washing, and I think I know the right doctor for your father to see."

"Please, ma'm," said Lincoln, twisting his hat in his hands, "you've been so powerful good, could Georgie come here sometimes and listen to the music? He surely kin play on the ol' fiddle."

"Certainly he may come, and sister too. Perhaps she would like to join some of our classes for young girls."

Still Lincoln lingered. "Miss Oliver," he stammered, "did—did you say you belongs to a Mission Board?"

Miss Oliver nodded, smiling.

"There was a Mission Board friend down South, too. I—I got *two* frien's now," said Lincoln shyly.

"I hope you will have many more," answered Miss Oliver, as she opened the door for him.

But Lincoln stood still in astonishment. There in a silent line, were the boys of his school, colored and white together. What had happened to them? One of Donald Bliss' eyes was swollen shut. Tony had lost his hat. Dominico's lip was bleeding, but big Bohemian John carried in triumph a small, torn American flag. What did it all mean?

"Why, boys!" exclaimed Miss Oliver, looking at them over Lincoln's head, "have you been fighting ever since I left you?"

"Yeh-er," replied big John, a grin spreading over his scratched face. "Dose bad boy from de Green Street school dey come to take de flag from our fort. We fight—we fight *togedder,* an' we keep de flag!"

"Yeh-er, we kept it!" broke in Donald.

"And now we make a parade wit de flag," declared John. "An'—an' we stop here for Lin."

"Come on, Lin!" called Dominico, grabbing Lincoln by the arm. "We mak-a da friends, me an' you!" and with a yell the boys were off, the flag waving proudly in the lead.

THE LOST POCKETBOOK

IV

THE LOST POCKETBOOK

"HICKETY-HOME, hickety-home! Hickety-home!" sang the wheels. "South! South!" panted the engine every time it left a station. Yes, South again was where Lincoln was going. The good doctor whom the people at the friendly church had sent to see his father, had told them that because of the cold of the big Northern lake city, the dampness of the stock-yard work, and the ramshackle, crowded rooms in which they had lived, his lungs had become affected, and that only by living in the open air of the sunny South could he hope to become well once more. But where should they go? They knew only their old home.

Sam Williams' father wrote that they might rent their old house again from old Mr. Crosby, with a bit of garden attached. The rent would be small, he said, for the farm which went with the house was already being worked, and a new "institution" would give Mr. Hall and Lincoln, also, work

by the day. What was the mysterious institution? Sam's father did not say. But where could they get the money for the long trip South? Hopelessly the little family talked the matter over and over, and then the big, friendly Church Mission again came to the rescue and lent them the money for the journey.

"If only I could take the school, an' Dominico an' Miss Oliver with me," sighed Lincoln, "I wouldn't mind goin' back."

"If only I could take the Girls' Club," added Caroline.

"I'se glad we-all is gwine back," declared little Georgie, "if only,—if only I could tote the pianer f'om the big church—"

Lincoln pulled the old, blue tin box out of his pocket and jingled the three silver dollars in it. "Just one I made up No'th," he mused.

"We're here!" screamed Georgie, his head out of the window.

"There's Sam Williams!" exclaimed Lincoln, "and he's got shoes on!"

Sam Williams was not the only one at the

station. There were all their former neighbors—the Williams family, the Moores, the Hobarts, and all the rest—all with shining faces and all in their best clothes. Lincoln had never seen so many bright new clothes before. Had all their old neighbors become wealthy in the nearly two years since the Hall family had moved away?

Mr. Williams stepped forward and shook hands with Lincoln's father. "In the name of the Farmers' League of this county I welcomes back our old friend and neighbor, Brother Hall!"

Then Mrs. Hobart stepped forward and, presenting a large bouquet of flowers to Lincoln's mother, said: "In the name of the Ladies' Helpin' Han' Society of our Church I welcomes you back home, Sister Hall."

The Helping Hand Society and the Farmers' League! Where had they come from? They had never heard of them two years before. In a daze of wonderment Lincoln, his father and mother, Caroline and Georgie were hurried by their old friends into a big farm wagon decorated with branches and

drawn by two big mules, and were taken back to their old home. They looked at the house in astonishment. Boards had been nailed on where they were off. The little sagging porch had been propped up; fresh putty showed where new panes of glass had been put in; while fluttering out from under the open sashes were bits of snowy white muslin curtains.

Speechless, they entered the low door. In the two front rooms were two old bedsteads and a little cot, all freshly painted. There were comfortable chairs and rockers made out of barrel staves, and brightly cushioned with chintz. In the kitchen, pieces of old boards had been nicely fashioned into a substantial table, painted to match the rest of the furniture, while on it was laid forth in tempting array a boiled ham, fresh corn bread and baked sweet potatoes.

But before the astonished travelers could say a word, Mrs. Hobart again stepped forward, and, lifting a bushel basket from the corner, presented it to Lincoln's mother. A loud clucking came from the inside. "This

is from the ladies, Sister Hall," she said, "fo' a beginnin'!"

The children darted forward to see what was inside. There, on a nest of hay, sat an old mother hen, quite indignant at the crowd of laughing faces, while fluffy little balls of yellow chicks peeped out from under her wings and scrambled upon her back for a better view.

With tears of joy running down her cheeks, Mrs. Hall thanked her old neighbors for their special gift to her.

"But the Farmers' League?" questioned Mr. Hall. "What is that?"

Mr. Williams rose to his feet. "Brother Hall," he said, "you remember that I wrote you 'bout the new institution in our midst? It am an institution of learnin' set here to be a shinin', inspirin' light amongst us, by the Mission Board what sent a representative here two years ago to look the groun' over. In other words, the Mission Board has bought the old Templeton place an' they aims to turn it into a school as fas' as possible. The school will open in September,

but the young colored brother, what came here with the Mission Board man, has been workin' over the place, a-layin' out the farm, an' a trabblin' over the county for a year an' a half, a workin' up interest in the school. He has organized the farmers of the county into a league fo' the improvement of our farms, our homes and our own selves. He has hitched us onto the Federal Loan Association, so that the gover'ment of the United States will help us git our own farms by lendin' us money to buy with. So all of your ol' neighbors, Brother Hall, now is settin' out to own their own land. That young colored man,—Mr. Leland is his name,—he graduated f'om Hampton, an' then from a farm college, up No'th, an' he teach us to build 'tractive furniture out of ol' barrels. He got the ladies of the church togedder fo' to improve the community. They has earned fo'ty dollars fo' to fix up the old schoolhouse. We has leveled up the flo', Brother Hall, an' the ladies hab bought some mo' books fo' boys and girls. With the help of Mr. Leland, we done had a build-

in' bee, an' fix yo' house up 'cause we know you-all can't fetch no furniture f'om the No'th; the ladies put up the chintz and curtains and prepare de feast. He'p yo'sef and welcome, brother," and, mopping his brow after his long speech, Mr. Williams sat down so hard in one of the new chairs that it creaked.

"Brother Williams, Brother Williams," said Lincoln anxiously, after his father and mother had expressed their thanks, "is they —are they going to have single desks in that school, an' pictures on the walls and real blackboards?"

But Georgie could not wait for an answer. "Is they aimin' to have a pianner?" he asked almost in a whisper.

"An' girls' clubs?" asked Caroline.

Mr. Williams fanned himself. "I sho'ly believe they will have all them embellishments," he said with authority.

"Mr. Williams, can anybody go to the school?" asked Lincoln, his heart thumping.

"The school will continue f'om de fo'th

grade up. The boardin' pupils kin earn their keep, but everybody that goes has to pay a small tuition. Yo' kin get mo' details tomorrow when yo' goes with yo' pa to see about the work."

Trudging home from the wonderful new school farm the next day, Lincoln asked his father anxiously, "Do you 'low I can go, Pappy?"

Mr. Hall slowly scratched his head. "I think we kin make it, son. There'll be washin' fo' the teachers at the school fo' yo' mother; you can help me afternoons and Saturdays on the farm,—y-yes, I reckon we kin make it, son."

"Hurray! Hurray!" cried Lincoln, and he turned a somersault of pure joy in the middle of the dusty road. "An' maybe Sis and Georgie can go next year, too, when they get into the fifth grade. But, hello, who am that—who is that person just hitchin' by the door?"

"It's sho' enough Mr. Crosby," replied his father hurrying forward. "I reckon he's come to see about the rent, son."

"Old Skinflint" Crosby, as everybody called him, stood with legs wide apart, gazing at the little house. "Yes, Peter," he said as Mr. Hall spoke to him, "I've come to see about the rent. I think, I think, Peter, that the place has improved much since I saw it last. I think, Peter, that I will have to charge you fifty dollars mo' a year than the sum I first mentioned to Sam."

"But, but, Mister Crosby, I understood when I come back f'om the No'th that you lemme hab it fo' what yo' tol' Sam. I—I sho' nuff understood that it was settled," stammered Lincoln's father, adding, "It's my frien's that's fixed it up."

"But, Peter, a landlord always has the right to raise his rent when there is no written contract. No, Peter, yo' can pay me fifty dollars mo'—I think the place is worth it now—or yo' can vacate," and nodding briefly over his shoulder, he was gone.

Lincoln's father sat down sadly upon the little porch. "I—I reckon, son," he said, slowly, "that yo' will have to wait till next year fo' yo' school."

"Oh, Pappy, isn't there any way?" begged Lincoln. "It ain't fair when he done nothin' 'bout fixin' thin's up."

His father shook his head. "There's the money we owe the church up No'th, an' there's five mouths to fill—an' I can't work very stiddy yet. No, son, I guess there ain't —no way."

"The old skinflint!" Lincoln burst out. "I —I just wish I could hurt—him," and the big tears rolled down the boy's face.

All through the long August days Lincoln worked side by side with his father on the land of the wonderful new school, and Mr. Leland explained all about the farm, and how it would be made an experiment station to try out crops and methods of farming, to find out how the land round about could be made to yield the most for the farmers. He showed him the new pigs, cows, and chickens on the place—better breeds than those which the farmers had.

And then September came; and Lincoln saw the new school furniture come in. Load after load of shining desks, pictures, black-

boards and maps, arrived. He watched them all with longing eyes. Boarding pupils—strange boys and girls from other parts of the country and of the state—came, for it was only two days more before school would open. "Next year, anyway," he sighed.

The sun had set, and Lincoln was trudging home in the dusk. His father had left long before. He was walking moodily in the ditch and kicking the dry elm leaves before him.

"Humph!" he said, "I wish these leaves wuz chestnuts." A stone rolled out of place. "What's that, an ol' shoe?" Lincoln stooped and picked something up. It was certainly an old piece of leather—queer and shriveled and covered with green mildew. What was it? It was shaped like an envelope. Gingerly, Lincoln lifted up the soggy, green flap. Inside was a piece of wet, discolored paper which fell to fragments in his hands. He stepped into the middle of the road and held it up in the faint light. "Must had writin' on it once," he said out loud. But what was that? Folded in with the damp old paper

was something dark. He drew it out. It clung to his fingers. It was an old twenty dollar bill!

Lincoln stood still in astonishment. "Twenty dollars!" he gasped. He peered into the old case again. No, there was nothing more there. "Twenty dollars! Wait till I shows it to Mammy!" and he started off at breakneck speed for home.

Suddenly he stopped short. "That will pay fo' school an' five dollars over, an' it's mine! But—but somebody done lose it," he added, forgetting his grammar. He walked soberly into the house.

For a long time the family discussed the wonderful find. They rubbed the mold off of the old leather and searched and searched, but no name could be found.

"It's been lost a right smart time," concluded Lincoln's father.

"Could—could I have it for my school if it don't belong to anybody?" asked Lincoln breathlessly.

His mother and father nodded. "Sho'ly, chil', if you don't find who it belongs to."

For the next two days all of the neighbors in turn had a call from a panting boy, who held up an old shrunken leather case and asked if they had ever seen it before. Had they heard of anybody's losing any money? In astonishment everybody in turn shook his head to the questions, and each time Lincoln's eyes lighted with hope. Elijah Hobart's father declared that there was no money around there to lose.

With trembling voice Lincoln told Mr. Leland the story on the morning school opened, and showed him the old case. He consulted with the white principal who was in charge of the school. They took down an old file of county newspapers, Mr. Leland had made, but there were no advertisements of lost money. "Well, Lincoln," smiled the new teacher, "I guess you are safe. Here is your school receipt, and here is five dollars change. Good luck to you," and he led the boy to the beautiful, shining, new sixth grade room.

Lincoln thought the new school the most wonderful he had ever been in, and when,

at recess, Mr. Copeland, the new principal, told the boys about forming a school football eleven, he shrieked and clapped with the others like a wild Indian instead of a colored boy down South.

School was at last over, and Lincoln was trudging gaily home, his new books slung in a strap over his shoulder. As he leaned over to tie his new shoe, a pencil fell out of his pocket.

"Huh," he exclaimed, straightening up. "I reckon I use that ol' case to put my pencils in." He took the old bill case out of his pocket and tried to fit the new pencils in it. One of them stuck and then burst through the leather, now dry and spongy. "Aw, too bad," he muttered and turned the case inside out to see how it could be mended. Suddenly some writing on the leather itself caught his eye. The color showed, now that the leather had dried out light. He could distinctly read, in the sunset, a name printed in India ink underneath the flap. It was "Cyrus Crosby."

Lincoln stood perfectly still. Old Skin-

flint! He had never thought of him, over in the next township. If he had lost any money, would he not have searched high and low for it? Everybody would have known. And then Lincoln remembered. Just before they had moved away "Old Skinflint" had been robbed. The thieves must have dropped the case here in the dark as they hurried away.

Was he to lose his precious school after all? A big lump rose in his throat. And —and the football team? But why should he? Hadn't he tried to find the owner of the money? "Old Skinflint" had forgotten it. He had plenty of money anyway. And he had no right to it. He owed that and thirty dollars more to Lincoln's father for breaking his word about the rent.

"An'—an' I've gone and been to school," he sobbed in the fence corner into which he had crawled. But why tell? Nobody knew.

Lincoln went home slowly, and very quietly he answered all the questions about the new school.

"Well," concluded Caroline in disgust.

"I reckon it ain't so fine after all, the way you tells about it!"

The next morning Lincoln was back in his seat before his shining, new desk, but somehow it did not seem so fine after all. Why did the sad eyes in the picture of Lincoln, above the blackboard, always look at him? The day before, the teacher had told them a story about Lincoln—how he had walked many miles to make good a mistake in change he had given a customer. He was called "Honest Abe," she said.

At recess Mr. Copeland called. "Come on, Lincoln," he said, "I thought you wanted to be on the football team?" But Lincoln only shook his head.

Mr. Copeland was closing up his desk for the night in the school office, on his way to supper, when suddenly he heard a slight noise behind him. Turning, he saw a boy in the indistinct light. "Oh, Lincoln," he exclaimed, "I thought you had gone home long ago!"

"Mr. Copeland," asked Lincoln in a

hoarse voice, "can you give me the school money back?"

"Why, Lincoln," said Mr. Copeland, "don't you want to go to school? I thought you wanted to come so much."

"Please, suh, I'd like the money back," and then the boy sobbed out the whole story.

It was nearly eight o'clock that night when a little dark figure plodded up the long drive to the Crosby house. Then the door opened and an old man stood before him with a lamp held high.

"Oh, it's you," grunted Old Skinflint. "Didn't you know enough to go to the back do', boy?"

"Yes, suh," answered Lincoln faintly, and started to go down the steps.

"Oh, well, since you're here, come in. What is it you want?"

"It's this," answered Lincoln briefly, holding out the old case. "I found it under the elms on the big road."

Old Skinflint's eyes slowly opened. "It's the very bill folder the villains robbed me

of under those very trees. Let me see. There was a twenty dollar bill in it," he concluded sharply and opened the folder. "Five, ten, fifteen, twenty,—yes that's right, but I distinctly remember I had a twenty dollar bill. What did you do with it, boy?"

"I—I didn't know it was yours—the writin'—your name—never showed till yesterday, when the leather was dry—an'—an' I went to the new school. They gave me the money back." And Lincoln moved timidly toward the door.

The old man's eyes looked him over sharply. "So," he said slowly, "seems as if there was an honest nigger after all! Well, good night." And he snapped a rubber band smartly about the old bill case.

Lincoln was glad the next morning that the farm work took his father and himself far from the school. He could not stand it to see the boys go in and out. He looked up at the sun. It must be about recess, he concluded. Who would sit in his new seat?

"Lincoln!" The boy looked up. Mr. Copeland was striding over the field. "Lin-

coln, you are to come right in to school. A Mr. Crosby has sent a letter. He says honest Negro boys are worth educating, and so he writes you are to go to school this half year, and let me see,—yes, he includes in his check the second half year too."

CAROLINE'S PLAY

V

CAROLINE'S PLAY

THE Girls' Service Club was meeting in the sunny sewing-class room of the big Belton Mission School. Caroline looked around the room enviously. Next year she would be studying here if all went well, for then she would be ready for the fifth grade. Several other girls from the district school were in the club too.

The afternoon's work was done, and the girls were piling up the little gauze squares they had been making for Red Cross work.

"Miss Gold," Caroline asked the teacher, "kin I study to be a trained nurse here in this school? I reckon I'll be comin' next year."

"I'm afraid not, Caroline," answered Miss Gold. "This school has no training-class for nurses. You know we would have to have a little hospital if we did, a head nurse to teach you, and a doctor to take care of the patients."

"But that's what we need!" exclaimed

Caroline, her eyes sparkling. "Ol' Dr. Moulton takes care o' us all he kin, but we-all haven't any hospital nor any nurse in this district. They had to put my brother an' Sam Higgins in the barn when they were sick."

"Ain't there any place we colored chil'en can learn to be nurses?" asked little Sally Willis.

"Not nearer than Atlanta, Sally," answered Miss Gold.

Caroline leaned over the table earnestly. "Miss Gold," she said, "*why* couldn't this school be fixed so's it could teach nursing?"

"You'll have to ask the Secretary of the Board," smiled Miss Gold, "when he comes to see us next week. He is going to make us quite a visit. But I am afraid he will think that we need many other things before it is time to start a nurses' training department."

Caroline walked home in a dream. Already she could see herself in a white cap and apron, going in and out of all the little cabins in the neighborhood, taking care of

the sick people and making them well. She saw herself in a little white hospital such as she had seen up North once. She would stick that glass thing into people's mouths just as she had seen the white-capped nurse stick it into her father's mouth.

And then one noon, Lincoln came breathlessly home from school to tell them all that the great Secretary of the Mission Board that had given them the school, had come at last. He was going to visit all the classes in the school and go all over the farm. Lincoln had heard it rumored that the Farmers' League and the Ladies' Helping Hand Society would give him a supper. "An'—an' he's goin' all over the county visitin' schools," the boy panted out at the end.

"Is he—is he comin' to Number 4?" asked Caroline.

"Course," answered Lincoln, his mouth full of sweet potato. Caroline walked soberly toward school. Could the whole school stand and ask the great Secretary if they might have a hospital? Could she get somebody's father to drive him around to

see the sick people? No. Would she dare to tell him that she and Sally and Corrine wanted to learn to be nurses? Never would she dare! Caroline stood still. And then suddenly she began to run. She had an idea!

District School No. 4 buzzed with excitement for the next week. Miss Gregory, the new teacher, had no trouble with attendance. Everybody was there early, and everybody stayed long after school at night. The little cot disappeared from Caroline's room at home, and she willingly slept on the floor. Sheets disappeared from beds; articles of clothing were begged and borrowed.

"Will we know when he's comin'?" asked Sally Willis, anxiously.

"How kin we fin' out?" worried Tad Greene.

"We've got to be ready all the time," declared Caroline.

But in the end they did know, for one noon-time Elijah Moore came racing in to tell them that his father had just left for a special meeting of the Farmers' League to

confer with the Secretary at the church that afternoon, and that Sam Williams had said he had heard Mr. Leland say, at the big school, that he and the Secretary would visit the district school directly afterwards.

Instantly all was bustle in the little room. Tad Greene was posted at the corner of the road to give them warning of the coming of their guests.

As the last bench was being placed at the back of the room for the visitors, suddenly there was a loud whoop from Tad outside. With one mad scramble the last boys and girls took their places upon the floor or in the few remaining seats. Miss Gregory hurried to the door.

There were not only Mr. Leland, Mr. Copeland and the Secretary, but the Farmers' League and various representatives of the Ladies' Helping Hand Society as well. The eyes of the boys and girls were round with awe as, at a signal from Miss Gregory, they shuffled to their feet and said in chorus, "Good afternoon! We're glad to see yer!"

"'Clare ter goodness!" exclaimed Sally

Willis's mother, "ef dere ain't one o' my sheets!" Sure enough, strung up across the whole front of the room on a wire, was a curtain of white sheets. The visitors gazed at it in surprise.

And then Miss Gregory made a speech. "In honor of the visit of the Secretary of the Board of Missions, we venture to present a little play. We call it, 'The Past and the Future.' We hope you will all enjoy it," and, bowing low, she stepped aside.

At a loud whisper from behind the scenes, Tad Greene opened the curtain.

Before the astonished eyes of the audience stood Elijah Moore, dressed to look like—yes, somehow he did make one think of old Dr. Moulton, who had doctored all the Negroes in the neighborhood for years.

"Takin' off white folks," exclaimed Elijah's mother in a horrified whisper. "Jes' wait till I gits dat boy home!"

But Elijah was very busy over a little dark cot, while a distressed mother and family stood around.

"Why, it's 'Sam Higgins', sick with the

typhoid!" exclaimed Sam Williams' father.

The doctor was asking question after question of the family. "You all sleeps in this room?" They nodded. "Ain't no other place to put him?"

"'Ceptin' in the kitchen," answered the tearful mother. "Then we got to move him right away into the barn," declared the doctor sternly, "since we-all has no hospital nor any place to send him."

The Negro mothers and fathers looked at one another in a shocked way. Everybody knew about Sam Higgins in the barn, but it had never seemed quite so bad before.

But Tad was opening the curtain again. There was "old Sarah Loomis" propped up in a chair, while Elijah, with an old piece of rubber hose spliced to look like a stethoscope, was listening to her lungs. "De new-monie!" he declared. In a very realistic way "young Sarah" wrung her hands. "How kin I take care of her, doctor, with five chil'en an my ol' man?" And, indeed, every one knew that young Sarah had worn herself out trying to take care of old Sarah,

and was now very sick herself. "Ef only, there was a hospital where she could be took care of well!" And the curtain closed over a doctor sadly shaking his head, while young Sarah covered her head with her apron and wept. Some of the real Sarah's friends in the audience joined her.

In the next scene, "little Bob Smith" appeared after his dreadful accident. Old Dr. Moulton was trying to bandage his head, but when he asked "Bob's sister" to help him, she fled, wildly screaming that she could not bear the sight of blood.

Then the audience saw "little Sophie Marks" gently rocking her baby sister's cradle. It was time for Sophie to give the baby some medicine, but she could not remember how much the doctor had told her to give. Sophie's mother was dead, and there was only Sophie to look after the baby. She could not read the directions on the bottle because she had never had time to go to school. "If only there was a real nurse to he'p take kere o' baby," said little Sophie piteously. She gave two teaspoonsful when

the directions called for only a few drops. When the baby became very ill, she wildly snatched her up and ran for the doctor. It was Bob Hobart's father who had picked her up in his wagon and driven her frantically to the doctor just in time to save the baby's life.

Then came "little Ephraim Towne" in his clumsy wheel-chair. Everybody loved little Ephraim. A group of children were gathered about him holding out to him bunches of the first arbutus flowers, while Dr. Moulton stood by Ephraim's side, saying that if there were only a hospital or sanitarium to which little Ephraim might be sent for special care and food, he could in time run about and play with the rest of the children.

Then Tad Greene opened the curtains on the last scene. There was Caroline's cot made up all in snowy white like the hospital beds. In it, very properly posed, lay a patient. By his side, in long white apron, in snowy kerchief and cap, stood Caroline herself. She was just withdrawing from

the patient's mouth the bulb of an old out-of-door thermometer, while Dr. Moulton stood by, remarking on the fact that the patient had not a bit of fever, a fact due to her remarkable skill as a nurse.

Caroline, however, proceeded to tell him that there were many more patients in the little hospital than she alone could care for and many in the neighborhood who needed visits. As she spoke, she looked expectantly down the little schoolroom to the door, for at that moment Corrine, Sally, and Myrtle should have trooped in, walked straight up to the platform and told how very much they wished to learn to be nurses. They were to tell how gladly they would help in the hospital and that they wished to spend their lives in caring for the sick of the neighborhood. But, alas, all that Caroline could see was three pairs of frightened dark eyes peering over the window sill. She repeated her last sentence in a little louder tone. Some of the school children began to giggle. Then she beckoned wildly. Sally only shook her head to indicate that they were too

scared to come, while Corrine began to cry. The audience turned their heads to learn the trouble. That was too much for the three little woolly heads at the window. They disappeared, and Caroline saw them fleeing to the woods.

Was her precious play to fail at the very end? People had laughed in the wrong places; she had got a glimpse of old Dr. Moulton in the back of the room. How had he come there? Would he be angry at what they had done? Many things had gone wrong. Elijah was trying to signal Tad to close the curtain. The very point of the play was going to be lost. Bravely keeping back her tears, she snatched off the beautiful white cap, unpinned the snowy kerchief and apron, and laid them on a chair, and then running down into the audience she turned and came up again. Bowing low before her own uniform, she started in on Sally's speech, but half way through she stumbled and then stopped. Oh, it was all a miserable failure. People were laughing. Turning toward the audience, she threw out her arms.

"Oh, I wants to be a nurse and take care o' the sick people, I wants to be it more than anythin' else! An' Corrine wants to, and Sally and Myrtle, an' how kin we if the Mission School don't larn us?" And throwing herself across the little cot, she burst into tears, while Elijah turned away in disgust, and Tad mercifully drew the curtain.

She had failed. But what was that? Dr. Moulton's gruff voice sounded through the thin sheeting. "This little girl has told the truth, gentlemen, and you have seen the truth! Only, I can tell you much more." Caroline crawled to the edge of the curtain and peeped through while the story went on.

Never before had the black people whom the old man had doctored for so many years known that he had cared so much. "And now, suh," he said, addressing the Secretary, "if you can cooperate with us by establishing this little hospital in connection with your school, I will pledge myself to give my services free, and I know other doctors who will do the same," and mopping his face the good doctor sat down.

Then the great Secretary rose, and said, though the idea was an entirely new one to him, evidently there was great need. He appreciated deeply Dr. Moulton's offer and would carry the message home to his Board. But they had been under great expense in starting the school and he feared there might be difficulty in raising the funds.

Instantly the old doctor sprang to his feet. "I will be glad to start a subscription, suh, with five hundred dollars, and I know there are other Southern white men who will be glad to help."

Sam Williams' father cleared his throat: "The Farmers' League ain't so very wealthy yit, but they sho'ly will be right glad to do their part."

Mrs. Willis rose to her feet. "An' the ladies of the Helpin' Han' Society will be much gratified to do their very bes'. The colored people will help theirselves as fer as they kin. The Board kin count on us."

There was a round of applause, and then Mr. Copeland spoke. "Miss Gregory has just told me," he said, "that the star of this

play is also the author. Let us call for Miss Caroline Hall." And then everybody clapped anew, and harder than ever.

Miss Gregory put her head through the curtain and beckoned excitedly to Caroline. The little girl came forward shyly, the tears still shining on her lashes.

"Miss Caroline, in the name of the audience, I thank you for showing us all this need," said Mr. Copeland.

The Secretary took a step forward. "And let me add," he said smiling, "that if Belton Academy does succeed in establishing a Nurses' Training School, and I have faith to believe we shall, it will welcome with open arms Caroline Hall as its first candidate nurse!"

THE MAGIC BOX

VI

THE MAGIC BOX

"NOW this," said the little old Hebrew music man, "is the very best violin I have. He very old." He shrugged his shoulders. "I not know how old." Tenderly he unwrapped the beautiful mellow case.

With shining eyes Georgie laid the violin under his chin and drew the bow. Lincoln and Mr. Copeland, the principal of the Mission School, watching, saw him close his eyes. And then the violin began to sing. It was not only one beautiful voice which Georgie brought out of the violin, but at times many voices singing together, and then at the end, one little thin voice alone soared up and up like a singing bird until the notes died away far up in the clouds. Never had they known that Georgie could play like that, even though Mr. Hunting, the music teacher at the Mission School, had told them Georgie was the most wonderful pupil he had ever had. Long ago Georgie

had ceased to want a piano, and decided he loved his old fiddle best.

The boy took a long breath and laid the violin down on the counter. "That is the one I want," he said.

Mr. Copeland glanced at the tag. "But, Georgie," he whispered, "you cannot afford to buy this one. I am sorry. Don't you think you better take that second one? That seemed like a pretty good one, and you have just money enough for it."

Georgie only shook his head.

"But, Georgie," urged the tall, eighteen-year-old brother, "the Commencement concert is only two days off now, and you have just your old fiddle. You can't do your best on that."

The shop-keeper waited. Georgie turned to him. "I'll give you all the money I have for a violin, if you will let me come and play on this one when I can."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Come when you please," he said, "but I may sell him any day."

"I don't see what you are thinking about,

Georgie," grumbled Lincoln, as they walked home. "When we have been waiting five years for a real Commencement and at last are going to have our first graduating class from the Mission School with all the grand visitors and everybody, and then you are going to play on your old fiddle!"

But Georgie did not seem to hear.

"Perhaps he will change his mind, when he thinks it over," said Mr. Copeland kindly.

When they reached home, Lincoln slipped away to his corner of the Mission farm. Since he had decided that he wanted to be a specialist in agriculture, the teacher had allowed him, a senior boy, one acre to do with as he pleased. It was separated from the rest of the farm by a hedge, and here he had worked and experimented. Here was a little orchard of fruit trees, all of which Lincoln had grafted himself. The fruit was developing finely. He laughed to himself as he thought of the wonderful tree he had wanted to invent when he was a little boy. In the sun outside of his orchard lay his tiny cotton

patch and his little field of corn. He had experimented with the fertilizer, and not a corn patch or a cotton patch on all the Mission farm or, for that matter, on all the farms in the county which Lincoln had seen, could come anywhere near his plants. He looked at the cotton carefully, drawing out his pocket magnifying glass. The horrible boll-weevil had not yet reached their county. But it was coming, everybody said. Oh, if he could only discover some way of stopping the pest before it reached them, how many people it would save from poverty and want!

Then he drew out his little old blue tin box. He had taken lately to carrying it in his pocket all the time, for was it not a magic box? It held all his future under the old battered lid. There were the three silver dollars—the one dated 1912 which Mr. Copeland had given him so long ago, the one he had earned driving the milk wagon for old Mr. Simmons, and the one dollar he had made up North. All the money he had been able to save for college since, was represented in the little brown leather bank book

which lay on top of the coins. He opened the book and read over the balance again, although he already knew it by heart. Yes, there would be enough for his next year at Hampton, and then—and then—could he go to the agricultural school of the big Northern university? Well—and he drew a long breath—he was going to try. He glanced up at the sun. He would be late for supper.

He shuffled along under the elms. He wouldn't walk under them so many times more, and he smiled to remember that it was here he had found "Old Skinflint's" pocketbook. But "Old Skinflint" hadn't lived up to his name after all. He had turned out to be one of Lincoln's best friends.

"Where's Georgie?" asked his mother as he entered the kitchen.

"Why I don't know, Mammy," he answered, "I thought he was here."

In his own room that evening, Lincoln studied the football pictures on the wall. He was the best football player at the Mis-

sion School. Mr. Leland had told him of colored boys who had been even on the Varsity teams. Perhaps—perhaps—and Lincoln fell to dreaming over his agriculture notebook.

Suddenly he looked up. Where was Georgie? He had not come in to study. He glanced at the clock. It was ten, and the rest of the family had gone to bed. Where was he? Lincoln ran to the door and looked down the road. Some one was moving carefully along in the shadows. He waited. Then he saw that the person limped. "Why, Georgie," he exclaimed, running up to him, "where have you been? And—Georgie—what is that—in your coat?"

"It—it's the violin," answered Georgie in a trembling voice.

"But how—did you get it?" asked Lincoln.

"I—I ran down to play on it again this afternoon—he said I could. And I was playing in the back room and a man came in the store. I heard him ask old Isaac about the violin. He said he thought he would

come to-morrow to buy it. Oh, I couldn't lose it. I couldn't! So I just wrapped my coat about it while old Isaac had stepped out a moment, and ran home. I left the case in its place."

"Georgie! You've stolen it," exclaimed Lincoln in a startled whisper.

"No, no!" answered Georgie. "It belongs to old Isaac. No, I would not steal it. I—I just—couldn't have the man buy it and take it away where I would never see it again."

"We must take it right back!" cried Lincoln. "Come, hurry, before old Isaac finds out."

"But then he will sell it," sobbed Georgie. "I can't, Lin, I can't!"

"Hurry," answered his brother. "Come, we must run. Here, give it to me, I can carry it."

"You'll hurt it!" cried Georgie.

"No. Hurry." And catching hold of Georgie's arm, Lincoln stumbled with him across the fields. "Hurry, hurry," he kept urging.

The streets of the town were dark when the panting boys reached them, but a dim light still burned in the back room of old Isaac's shop. With a trembling hand Lincoln knocked.

"Here it is," he panted, as the old man opened the door. "Here—" and he held out the violin.

In speechless astonishment old Isaac looked at them.

"He—he borrowed it," explained Lincoln.

Then the old man recognized the violin. "What!" he exclaimed, "you—you steal my violin—my best violin?"

"No—no!" broke in Georgie.

"I will have you arrested—I will call in the police—"

"No, no," begged Lincoln. "No, don't you understand? We have brought it back—"

"Oh, Mr. Isaac," cried Georgie, "I will work for you all the rest of my life if you will only keep the violin and let me play on it."

"Never!" exclaimed the old man. "Never come into my sight again!"

"Oh-h!" sobbed Georgie.

"Here,—here," urged Lincoln, and taking the old, blue tin box out of his pocket he pressed it into Isaac's hands. "I will buy the violin of you. Here is the bank book, see? I will give it to you, and—and the three dollars besides. That—that will pay for it."

"Let me see—not so fast," exclaimed the old man. "Yes, yes, I see. That is right. Yes, I will keep the book for surety, and later you will go with me to the bank and draw out the money."

"After Commencement," promised Lincoln.

"Yes," answered old Isaac, and he placed the violin in Georgie's arms.

Lincoln glanced at the empty tin box lying on the counter. He would not need it any more.

Georgie carried the violin home as if it had been something alive and talked to it all the way, while his brother stumbled wearily

by his side. It was all over, he thought. He would never go to college.

It was nearly morning before Lincoln fell asleep and then he did not waken until the sun streamed full in his face. Georgie was perched on the foot of his bed looking at him. "Lin," he said hoarsely, "was that your school money?"

But Lincoln did not answer. "You do your best at the concert, Georgie, boy," he said, "and make us all proud." And then he hurried out.

The next day would be Commencement. The boys decorated the school and no one worked harder than Lincoln. He wanted to forget. As he tacked up festoons and carried jars of water, he kept thinking that he must speak to Mr. Copeland or Mr. Leland. He must tell them that he had changed his mind and would work on the school farm the next year.

It was late that night when he reached home and Georgie seemed to be sleeping soundly. Lincoln looked at him. Georgie would be lame all his life, while he had two

strong legs which could carry him anywhere. And then Georgie's wonderful, wonderful gift! It was right that he should have the big chance. Lincoln felt ashamed that he had not thought of that before.

The next morning all was hurry and bustle. Lincoln put on his fine new suit, for at ten o'clock he would graduate. His mother bustled in and out getting ready, and Caroline dashed in at the last moment to fasten a flower in his button hole.

"It's my Commencement gift to you," she said as she laughed.

"Hurry," exclaimed Lincoln, "I'm late."

"Wait a minute," called Georgie, limping up. "Here's my Commencement gift for you," and he pressed into Lincoln's hand a neat little white paper parcel.

"Thank you, thank you," called Lincoln, "but I must run!"

Proudly the Negro boys and girls received their diplomas from the hands of the Secretary of the Mission Board, who was making a special visit to bestow them upon the first class to graduate.

Then Mr. Copeland rose and read the list of honors. "The highest in agriculture," he said, "belongs to Lincoln Roosevelt Hall!" There was loud applause. "Lincoln will enter Hampton Institute in the fall," he continued. "We have received his acceptance this week; and then, we hope, after one year, he will represent us in a big Northern university—our first Belton Academy college man!" Again all the boys and girls and all the visitors clapped until the noise was deafening.

Lincoln bowed his head. Oh, if he had only told Mr. Copeland the day before about the change! How could he ever tell him now?

And then came the musical program as the close of the exercises. Last was Georgie's turn. Smilingly he rose and took his place by the piano. The accompanist played the opening bars of the "Largo." What was that? Lincoln nearly rose from his seat among the graduates. Georgie was placing the old fiddle under his chin! It was old Uncle Ebenezer's fiddle! Where was the

beautiful new violin? Was Georgie crazy? What had happened to it?

Then suddenly Lincoln clapped his hands upon his breast pocket. With trembling fingers he drew out the hard little white parcel. He tore off the paper. There was the old, battered blue tin box. He lifted the lid. In it lay his little brown bank book, and—yes, the three silver dollars!

"He took it back," he whispered. "He took it back!"

But the music was swelling to a triumphant close. How did he get all those joyful voices singing together out of the old fiddle? To Lincoln it seemed even more beautiful than the new violin as the happy voices softened in the last stately bars.

Again and again the people applauded. And then Georgie placed the old fiddle once more under his chin. This time it was a merry little dance tune. One could fairly see the fairies come tripping out of the wood, to dance in a mad revel. One heard their laughter as, with one last little fling, they vanished.

At the end everybody began congratulating everybody else, but Lincoln went straight to his brother. A strange visitor from the North was talking to him. "I would like to engage you now for my church," he was saying, "and that will give you an opportunity, with the money you earn there, to attend the conservatory. You have a gift which ought to be cultivated. Will you come?"

"If Mammy and Pappy will let me," answered Georgie, his face alight. Tremulously the mother and father consented.

"He really hasn't a decent violin, Dr. Sylvester," said Mr. Copeland, "but I do not see why he should not have. He has looked at a very excellent one here. I don't see why, Georgie," he continued, turning to him, "now that you will have a regular position, you can not get that violin on the instalment plan. I'll just step to the 'phone and ask old Isaac, now." Down out of sight Lincoln gripped Georgie's hand hard. It was the happiest moment of Georgie's happy day.

And then proud sister Caroline came up, quite a young woman now. "Why, why," exclaimed the big Secretary. "Here's our little nurse. I tell you, Dr. Sylvester, this girl as well as the rest of the people here, worked hard for our hospital, and when we open it in the fall she will be our first candidate nurse."

"It's yours, Georgie," Mr. Copeland called out as he rejoined them. "Isaac is sending it right up." He looked quizzically at the two brothers. "That is, Georgie, it's yours if you can work for it."

"I surely will!" promised Georgie.

"We all will work if we only get the chance," added Lincoln.

"We aim to work—and to help," added Caroline.