



By Sanction of Law

JOSHUA HENRY JONES, JR.

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DEDICATED

TO

*my father and the man I revere and most
deeply respect next to him, the Honorable
James M. Curley, Mayor of Boston.*

BOOKS BY MR. JONES

*Poems of the Four Seas, The
Heart of the World,
and Other poems*

PREFACE

To the reading public:

I have not undertaken to present between these covers something that will cause the venom of prejudice to grow more poisonous; to arouse greater antagonisms; but to lay before a fair-minded, love-governed world the only real solution of any problem of the many mankind face. Having lived and battled in a world of prejudice, knowing that under the skin I was and am no whit different than any other human being, and knowing the fallacy of race prejudice, also the swiftness with which race prejudice vanishes when we know one another, I have tried to show how all can dwell side by side, good patriotic American citizens, living and allowing to live.

I have reserved to myself the right of every story teller, viz. — to name outright some places to which the story reaches and to merely describe others. Not all the events described have occurred in the places where they have been placed in the story but they are based on actual happenings nevertheless. The thread of my story is human; as human as life itself, just as Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Desdemona, Ruth and Boaz and Jacob and Rachael are human.

THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER I

Colonel Park Lauriston sat in the shadiest corner of the wide veranda ornamenting two sides of the magnificently roomy, many-gabled, "Big House" as it was still known by all the pensioners of this South Carolina plantation, from the Negro field hands to the tenantry and overseers. As he sat, sheltered beneath an enormous spread of white oak branches a soft near-spent gulf breeze bore up to the nostrils of this typically aristocratic Southerner the deliciously combined odors of flowering jasmine, green bay and honeysuckle though it was almost the fag end of the summer season. It was to him like a breath from an oasis in the midst of a hot, sandy desert.

The house stood at the rear of one of those old-fashioned gardens in which grew well-trimmed, dwarf cypress and juniper trees as well as many other specimens of shrubbery and trailing vines; planted and grown in artistic relation to their general appearance, and calculated to satisfy the eye for beauty whether it saw them from the big white sandy road on which it faced, or from the veranda from which Colonel Lauriston now gazed and meditated. Over all this the very house itself towered with a dignified aloofness as if to defy neighborliness with the traffic that passed its distant front gate.

The day was one of those hot sultry mid-August times when Nature seems parched and gasping. Before Colonel Lauriston, on a tete-a-tete table, stood a glass of refreshing julep from which he sipped luxuriously languid swal-

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lows at the same time slowly fanning himself with a wide palmetto leaf.

The attitude, the slow, leisurely deliberate movements and the calm expression about the glinting yet kindly eyes of grey indicated that he was in a happy, complacent state of mind as if conscious of a duty done. And he was satisfied in spirit for he had just ridden in after a trip over the wide fields of his estate where blossoming cotton rows drooped and a veritable sea of silking corn swayed with languorous precision that almost caused one to drowse and dream hypnotically. This ride had been torrid beneath a still more torrid southern sun and Colonel Lauriston was now resting, glad to be beneath the shade and protected from the stifling heat that simmered up from a parching earth.

The sun was not more than three hours from setting now and Colonel Lauriston studied the shadows, extending from trees and shrubbery over the plush-soft lawn divided in weird twistings by a white gravel walk and driveway. From this contemplation his eyes roved to the little particles of light that filtered through the leaves of the great over-reaching oak.

"Drat it all," he mused, "This heat is hellish. Here it is, 'lay-by' time and not a cooling breath stirring. Wish 'twas time to go North with Lyda—"

Before he could say more a delightfully musical voice called from within the house:

"Daddy, did you call?"

Colonel Lauriston lifted his head deliberately to speak,

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changed his mind which refused to be distracted from its reveries, then sipped from his glass at the same time setting his fan in renewed motion. His meditative mood gripped him again.

While busy with his thoughts his eyes lifted and his vision fixed itself on the distance across the field and along the ribbony road on which a vehicle of some sort could be seen approaching. The Colonel's eyes narrowed in effort to more clearly discern the object approaching. The pupils of his eyes also contracted, behind the lids, to beads of steel as the vehicle raised its trail of hot parched dust then he turned again to his fan and julep with:

"Old John can't hide himself even in his dust."

The thought caused the Colonel to chuckle with mirth at his joke till his spare frame shook him almost into an outburst of laughter.

"In a devil of a hurry, too, for this time of day," he added as an after comment, still intent on the approaching dust cloud. He turned for a moment to his refreshment and when his eyes next took in the figure, man and vehicle were turning into the open gateway at the front of the lawn a quarter of a mile away and wheeling briskly up toward the veranda. The team showed no slackening of pace till buggy and passenger had rounded the curving approach and swung up to the hitching post under the tree whose patriarchal fifty-foot branches spread themselves about the front of the house and its veranda as if to guard and protect it from all the vicissitudes of weather whether winter storms or summer suns.

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This giant white oak was indeed a patriarch of the plantation. It was planted in Colonial days by the founder of the house of Lauriston and encouraged to grow through succeeding generations till now it had become the most venerable and venerated bit of the estate except possibly the dining room plate and furnishings. These also had been kept intact and handed down from head to head of each succeeding generation of Lauristons.

Colonel Lauriston was himself now almost as much a patriarch as was this oak and the "Big House" itself. A tall, Indian-straight, spare-limbed man beyond middle age, with aquiline features and the grace of kings in his every motion, thoughtful eyes and high well-formed forehead set off by grey mustache and thinning hair.

As the buggy, horse and man stopped, creaking, panting and puffing at the post:

"Hello, John," was the Colonel's greeting.

"Fu-fu-fu-fu-tuh, Hello Park," stammered the visitor. The two men had been neighbors and cronies since boyhood with that comradeship that grows between friends of long standing.

"Aren't you 'fraid you'll leave some grease on the road traipsin' 'long at this rate, John? It's no time for fat men like you to be fussing 'round country roads." The Colonel smiled broadly as he spoke.

"Fu-fu-fu-fu-tuh grease your grandad. Ef youall fu-fu-fu-tuh had s-s-s-some o' my grease you'd fu-fu-fu-tuh have asthma," retorted the visitor.

"They'll sure have to provide a new spring board in

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Hades when you jump off, John. Your three hundred pounds 'll sure break the one they're usin' now," twitted Colonel Lauriston.

Having no ready reply to that sally, Old John Marley good-naturedly joined in the laughter into which the Colonel burst as he scored on the peculiarity of his boyhood chum and visitor. Old John's Falstavian sides heaved like billows with each chuckle. The heft of John Marley had been the source of joking between the two men for years, though good-naturedly. Old John took both his bulk and the twitting of his friend philosophically.

"Light, John 'n come up," offered the Colonel hospitably, when the joking ended.

Old John started to ease his proportions which had seemed to spread themselves out over all the seat of the buggy, tilting the body on its springs in such a degree as to threaten overturning the vehicle.

"Look out! Look out!" shouted Colonel Lauriston, "It'll tilt over 'tother way on the flyback, if you don't look out."

The prediction was false, however, for climbing out of this buggy was no new experience to Old John. He finally accomplished the process, dragged his flacidity up the steps to the high veranda and swung over to the corner in which the Colonel had been sitting, seated himself in a handy stout rustic oak rocker of home-made design, built for support rather than ornament and began fanning and puffing. Colonel Lauriston seated himself again before his drink and called:

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"Lida! Lida!"

The voice that had called to him when he first began to rest again echoed from within some recess of the house.

"Yes, Daddy," she responded.

"Bring another glass of mint, Girl. Company's come," Colonel Lauriston requested.

The two men sat in silence for a few moments, Old John Marley puffing as he rocked back and forth and fanned to cool himself, Colonel Lauriston toying with his glass. As they waited the screened door was pushed quietly open and a tall girl, not yet fully entered into the first flush of womanhood, lithe and full of vibrant vitality appeared carrying a tray on which were two glasses of cool, tantalizingly refreshing julep.

She seemed a silver blond-haired goddess as she stepped across the threshold onto the veranda with a free swing indicative that she had not yet been spoiled by any affectations or vanities. She bore the tray like a Hebe, her summer frock, neither tight fitting nor loose, clung to her form just enough to give emphasis to graceful proportions. The eyes of both men followed her fondly as she approached and placed their glasses, removing that from which her father had been sipping.

Old John noted every motion with approving eyes, inwardly commenting on the fact that she possessed her father's eyes except that they were larger and more of the dreamy kind, with long lashes to match her hair. Her hair hung down her back in one long full heavy braid as is the style of simple, unaffected girls brought up in an at-

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mosphere of simplicity. Her face had the general contour of a Greek statue and conscious of the fact that the elder man was studying her, her cheeks flushed to the delicate pink of a shell from the sea, from her forehead along her aquilinely aristocratic, sensitive nose to her well chiselled chin.

Old John noted the coloring and added to her confusion by remarking:

“D-d-d-don’t you fu-fu-fu-tuh mind me, Lida. You’re a right pert girl and your daddy’s pride. I fu-fu-fu-tuh hope you’ll be mine too, in a way, some day.”

She could stand no more but hurried confusedly into the house where her blushing might not be seen. The two men watched the figure of the retreating girl in fond silence seemingly having forgotten their refreshments. Old John was the first to speak. He slowly turned his head from the door through which the girl had vanished as if loath to lose the vision and half expecting that she would return, sipped then drank heartily. Placing the half emptied glass on the table he turned to Colonel Lauriston.

“Fu-fu-fu-tuh I was fu-fu-fu-tuh thinking, Park, that your girl would make a good match for my John. Fu-fu-fu-tuh seeing’s we’ve been fu-fu-fu-tuh friends and neighbors fu-fu-fu-tuh so long and our fu-fu-fu-tuh families been neighbors before us. It would fu-fu-fu-tuh be nice to have our fu-fu-fu-tuh acres joined that way. We’d fu-fu-tuh leave the pair mighty nigh, fu-fu-fu-tuh the whole of Hebron County between us when we go. And it would

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fu-fu-fu-tuh sort o' ease my way over the fu-fu-fu-tuh line if I knew John had a wife like Lida fu-fu-fu-tuh to watch out for him and raise his family.

Colonel Lauriston remained silent several moments then asked:

"How's John feel about it? — You know Lida's my only girl and I won't force her to anything. Her ma's not here to look after her and I've got to. I believe in letting her choose for herself when the time comes but I'm not any too durned anxious to see her go from me even to your son John. Besides, it's no use doing her courting for her; and I don't believe John'll take well to us old codgers meddlin' either. We're a pair of old doddering fools to think of it. You know colts have got to have their heads a little or they don't break well to harness."

"I fu-fu-fu-tuh, I've fu-fu-tuh talked with John and got his slant. He likes the girl purty well. Fu-fu-tuh give them a chance to fu-fu-fu-tuh be fu-fu-fu-tuh together some and you'll fu-fu-fu-tuh have another son and I'll fu-fu-fu-tuh have a daughter. It won't fu-fu-fu-tuh take two healthy young people like John and Lida long fu-fu-fu-tuh to be holdin' hands and lookin' calf eyes at each other if they fu-fu-fu-tuh run together a little. You've fu-fu-fu-tuh held the girl too fu-tuh much to herself. Fu-fu-fu-tuh give her some company. Fu-fu-tuh give her company."

"Yes," Colonel Lauriston's eyes narrowed as he spoke. "You mean give her John's company. Well, I don't mind telling you. I don't hanker after your land. It's made

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you too durned much like a—a—a—a—,” here Colonel Lauriston became lost for a fitting adjective with which to describe the mass of fatty flesh before him. “I’ve got enough for Lida and her bub, Elvin and as for company, she’s going to have that for I’m leaving next week for the North where Lida’s to have a year at school and see some of the world and have company. Your John’s a likely enough boy but he’ll have to take his chances with the rest.

“My Elvin’s finished off his schooling up there and it’s done him a mighty sight o’ good. He comes home this fall and Lida goes for her chance. When she gets back if John’s willin’ he can pop like any other man—same’s you and I did, and take his answer. But as for me joining hands and plotting with you for that event, I tell you there’s too many chances o’ his bein’ an old porpoise like you when he ages for me to go yelling for him to be my son-in-law. We’ve been good friends John—and good neighbors but man, durned if I want any of your fat on my hands.”

Old John began to stammer a reply but before he could frame the words from around the corner of the house there came screams and shouts of a woman in raving madness and anger.

“Let me go, you rascals! Let me go! Don’t you dare touch me. I will see him. Where’s the old varmint? Where’s he—where’s he?—” Her screams became unintelligible hysterical as she swept into view, two of the

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Negro servants who had been working on the lawn following and clutching at her hands.

Colonel Lauriston leaped from his chair and rushed toward the end of the veranda from which the sounds came. Old John Marley waddled puffingly behind, his flabby face agitated to a pale beet red flush. Colonel Lauriston reached the corner of the house almost in collision with the irate woman, who proved to be Mrs. Sally Gorton, a tenant on the estate the ousting of whose family had been one of the errands of Colonel Lauriston during his afternoon ride.

"Ah, you snake!" she screamed." Take that—and that—and that." With each word she applied a rawhide whip to Colonel Lauriston's head, face and shoulders. He sought wildly to seize the lash but she grabbed it from his hands and plied it again and again. Finding himself unable to prevent the blows the Colonel jumped back, at each step of retreat trying to catch the lash so as to wrench the whip from the woman. Her aim in each blow was perfect, however. With blazing eyes and hair streaming she seemed a veritable fury and to have uncanny knowledge of where to ply the lash so as to elude his grasp.

Lida, however, attracted from the house by the screams rushed to the veranda in time to see her father being lashed and jumped between him and the woman in time to receive one stroke across her shoulder. This blow across her tender flesh raised a welt of blue that could be seen quickly, showing its discoloring trace under the thin waist she wore. With no hesitating thought she braved the blow

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screaming to the servants to grab the whip. At her shout and the sight of the blow the two employees caught the whip and held it. Mrs. Gorton's fury seemed to change then and she railed like an infuriated witch.

"You'll drive me off my place, will you? —" she raged. "After all these years. Park Lauriston you're vile — you're rotten — you-you-you dog! After all I've done for you — after all I've been to you since your wife, the mother of that girl, died. Now when I'm getting old and no longer useful you'll put me off your place, will you? The day'll come when you'll be sorry — the sorriest man possible. You, with your pride of family. You'll be sorry Park Lauriston. There's justice for every wrong. This may be my punishment but neither the blood of the Carterets, nor the Beauforts of which you boast will save you. My day will come and from this time on I — I — curse you and your family."

Her hysteria seemed to subside with the imprecation pronounced in this most dramatic way, her hands uplifted and her face toward the skies. Her whitening hair, straggly and fallen in disarray, added to the weirdness and solemnity of the curse. As she lowered her head and turned away her hysteria changed to tears. Lida was clinging to her father protectingly, wide-eyed in wonder and trying to understand it all, her face toward the woman on whom she had always looked as a godmother but who was suddenly turned her enemy, fearing the imprecations and yet preserving a haughty pose.

"Yes," continued the woman addressing her words to

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Lida. "Stand there in your pride and protect him. You don't know him and it's a good thing you don't." Her anger rose again and she waved her hand as if to take in the whole sweep of the plantation. "You're all cursed," she shouted. "Your whole house is cursed and I'll live to see the day when ruin will stalk in your midst and you'll regret this day and doings. The whole brood of Lauristons is cursed."

Colonel Lauriston had caught his daughter in his arm protectingly now as they stood listening to the woman's ravings. When she ceased and turned away, Lida began to weep silently, depressed by the maledictions. Colonel Lauriston led her gently back into the house, the girl shuddering and asking between her sobs: "What does she mean, Daddy? What does she mean?"

Some of us reach maturity out of youth so gradually as to make the change unnoticeable; others bridge the gap in a night or a day while others are made men and women in an instant, by some great catastrophe or incident that sees us children one moment and adults the next. We face some great issue in life and the facing it makes over our natures and we become men and women. With the scene through which Lida Lauriston was just living she was leaving her youth and insouciance behind her. Life was gripping her in its whirl. She seemed to sense the change yet could not fathom it.

When her question remained unanswered, between her sobs as she clung to the arms that enfolded her, she asked again:

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"Daddy, what did she mean? She-she-she was so horrid." Convulsive sobs were causing her body to shudder as the tears flowed again.

"Never mind, child," Colonel Lauriston comforted. "We'll be leaving for the North next week and be out of her way. She can't harm you anyway. She meant nothing. I just put her out of the crossroads house today and she's mad."

The scene was exceedingly painful to the three remaining on the veranda after the woman had departed followed by the servants. Colonel Lauriston's face was frightfully distorted with spasms of passion surging through him as well as the miserable, shuddering and hysterically weeping Lida as she half reclined in his arms.

The situation was also painful for Old John Marley; so intensely painful that when the ragings ceased with the maledictions and father turned toward the door with his daughter, Old John waddled toward the steps without attempt at adieus. He turned only long enough as he was about to descend to his buggy, to see Colonel Lauriston half leading, half supporting the almost swooning girl into the house at the same time saying:

"Never mind, Child — There now — Never mind — Dont cry any more. I'll take you right away and you'll soon forget the tauntings of the old woman. Don't you go and mind what Sally said."

"But Daddy, she str-str-struck you," Lida sobbed in another outburst. "And-and-and-said such horrid things."

Colonel Lauriston resorted to the pet name he had given

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his daughter when but little more than an infant so deeply was he moved to console the girl.

"Never mind, Nubbins — never mind, Honey — Forget her — We'll get ready and go North as soon as possible." He knew this was the one thing his daughter had set her heart on and had been planning for as well as dreaming of for some time and this appealed to him as the suggestion that might most easily cause her to forget the present unfortunate affair. "We'll get away the first of the week and then you'll forget. The winds up there'll bring back the calm to your soul and the color to your cheeks."

As he spoke he stroked the silver blond head that lay on his shoulder till the convulsive sobs grew fewer and fewer and finally quiet gripped Lida again.

Colonel Lauriston and his family differed much from most of those most noted in South Carolina largely because of the long line of illustrious ancestors through which the name had run from Colonial times to the present. Because of the boast of lineage in which blood was mingled that of Huguenots from the Carterets, the Oglethorpes, Cordovas and the Middletons, the family was one of the most exclusive in the state and only after the War of the States when the whole social fabric of the South was destroyed did the blood of less illustrious persons enter into the strain. In keeping with that background, Colonel Lauriston had insisted that his family preserve the purity of diction that would mark it from the remainder of the natives, hence neither he nor any of his household had allowed themselves to be affected by the nasal drawl so char-

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acteristic of the South. Not only did Colonel Lauriston scrupulously study himself to avoid this but he sought by education and the training of his children to prevent them from musically gliding over their words. To make sure that they remained untouched by the habit adopted all about them he had his children educated by correctly speaking tutors and instructors, surrounded them with persons who spoke only the purest language and sent them to schools in the North to secure their education.

It was in keeping with this custom of his that he had planned for his daughter, Lida, to have a year in the North at some finishing school before she should assume her place at the head of his domestic household, taking the place of his wife who had died when Lida was but a child.

CHAPTER II

Market Square, in that Northern city to which Colonel Lauriston had brought his daughter for her year of polish and cultural finish was a busy mart on this delightful August morning when they arrived. The change from the stifling heat of the South to the entrancingly cooling blue New England sky and sunshine had already worked additional wonders in the cheeks and eyes of this flower of the Carolinas. The former were delicately pink tinted and the latter wider opened at the sights unfolding to her in this new world; sights new to her but so common to this staid old University city that they passed unnoted and ignored.

To Lida, however, whose horizon up to this time had been bound by vast fields of growing cotton, corn and wheat, broken here and there by forests of oak and tall pines this was a veritable fairy land from which she could see the wide blue bay with ships coming and going, tugs busily puffing away with their monstrous loads at their sides or trailing along behind, the tugs seeming like and reminding her of ants about her own home who tackled and carted away loads many times larger than their seemingly frail bodies and who, for their strength had always been a source of wonder and marvel to the girl. She was also reminded, as she watched the small tugs with their buffers of plaited rope at their bows steam up to some giant craft, of pictures of buffalos she had seen, with bushily lowered heads charging across the plains.

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"Look, Daddy, aren't they wonderful? It doesn't seem as if they could pull those monstrous ships. How can they do it?" As she stood watching one of these little ants of the sea swing a ship of leviathan-like proportions from her slip, and point her down the bay, musical laughter of girlish delight rippled from her throat. Even Colonel Lauriston caught the spirit of his daughter and smiled happily as he enjoyed her chatter and comment, pleased that she was delighted and that he had been able to provide such joy for her. At her laughter also, even the matter-of-fact old New Englanders to whom such a sight was so common as to be beneath their notice paused, looked at the girl in her frank pleasure, then stopped also to enjoy the scene as if viewing it for the first time.

Colonel Lauriston stood for a few moments allowing Lida to take in the scenes that moved in panorama before her ere warning her that they had to finish their journey. As she stood gazing, entranced, down the harbor toward the sea, Colonel Lauriston, loathed to break the spell that held the girl, finally drew forth his watch and reminded her: "Come, Lida, Child, we must be going."

"Oh, Daddy, this is a wonderful place. I know I shall love it!" She exclaimed enthusiastically.

Without answering, Colonel Lauriston aided her into the taxicab that had been summoned when they alighted from the conveyance by which they had come from the train to the Square. He gave the address of their destination to the driver, then settled back, glad to see his daughter in such a happy mood. He had determined to place

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her in one of the most fashionable finishing institutions in New England, Miss Gregory's School for Girls, noted all over the country for the careful training and the standing given it among select schools, largely because of its proximity to one of the larger universities of the East, in the shadow of whose greatness this girls' school basked.

Nestling among the elms for which the city was famous, on a prominence around which the wealth and aristocracy of the city was grouped, the main building of Miss Gregory's school sat fronting a well kept lawn, the elms and lawn combining to create the picture of some monastery of heavy stone masonry. This structure had once been the home of an eccentric millionaire who toiled to accumulate, then erected this mausoleum in which he planned to pass his declining days overlooking the city below and amusing himself counting the passing small craft on the Seekonk River which passed the rear of his wide garden.

When the mansion was built it was then the fashion of New England aristocracy to acquire immense acres of land, build imposing structures on some prominent and well chosen part of it, fence in the entire plot with a high stone wall and make a fairy garden out of a portion of the enclosed land in the rear of the house, while utilizing the other part for garden purposes. Such had been the history of the ground now occupied by Miss Gregory's school. The entire plot covered some twelve acres with this three-storied cupola-studded castle-like building, now ivy over-run standing as a bar to entrance if viewed from the front;

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and like a monarch counting his fields if viewed from the distant rear. Running vines covered most of the stone wall, save at the corners where parapets like outposts were built.

In former years, as the cherry and pear trees ripe with tempting fruit stretched their tantalizing branches over the wall, every passing school boy on his way to swim cast longing eyes, but the height of the wall prevented any yielding to temptation. Also in the spring the garden seemed a veritable sanctuary for migratory birds who revel in the freedom of the place and its security as every breeze wafted to the street odors from blossoming flowers and trees.

Gradually as the city grew to and beyond the estate those who lived on the opposite sides of the streets bordering it were treated to the beauty within, their upper windows allowing clear view of the entire place.

The flowers and the gardens were still a feature as were also the birds in spring, but where there was otherwise silence and quiet now that Miss Gregory's school occupied the place, in the springtime and summer where bird songs once charmed and tempted the passerby to pause and listen, now there was the merry laughter of girls at fun. Where once the cherries and pears tempted passing boys now these were plucked from within by daring hoydenish girls, who once in a while in their daring peered over the wall at the passing city from their perches in the overhanging branches or sometimes dared discretion and the wrath of some instructor or governess to toss

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fruit to passing youth in a spirit of flirtation and in their exuberance of youthful spirit. When once the fruit was thrown there would be a bashful half-smothered scream and the youth would look up just in time to see a face quickly disappear.

It was to this school on Brook Street, that Colonel Lauriston brought his daughter after having carefully studied the catalogues of more than half a hundred institutions which offered to do for her what his ambitions had planned. The carriage drew up to the walk leading to the heavily carved, brass-knocked door and the two stepped to the street. A bevy of eager curious-eyed faces watched the Colonel and his daughter pass their luggage to attendants and then walk to the door.

The school was just in the midst of fall opening and older students were watching for the return of friends and the incoming of new pupils. As father and daughter reached the door it swung wide to welcome them and they were soon seated in a large high vaulted reception room while the servant sought Miss Gregory. Arrangements for the year were soon completed and Lida enrolled as a pupil.

Having installed Lida in the care of Miss Gregory and satisfied himself that she would be well protected, Colonel Lauriston departed. Miss Gregory, a small, calm, motherly-faced woman whose hair was but just tinging grey, whose popularity with her girl proteges was due to the sympathetic heart she possessed and the tactful way she had of persuading the girls to conduct themselves as she

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wished, formed a liking for Lida from the first meeting. The pupil from the South seemed so fresh and new to the great world into which she had come that her very shyness drew the sympathy of the educator and the two unconsciously became friends though friendship was unprofessed till later circumstances brought them together more intimately.

Lida was miserably lonesome at the departure of her father but as is the way with youth in good health these pangs were forgotten in the excitement of surroundings and new acquaintances except at night upon retiring and upon awakening. Then tears would come to her eyes despite her efforts at repression. At such times the world became utterly desolate till after she had been at the school a week Miss Gregory chanced to be passing her room and thinking the girl asleep touched her cheek with a caressing hand to find it moist.

Without a word she bent over the girl and kissed the tear spot tenderly. Impulsively Lida clasped her arms around the woman's neck and wept till her grief was spent while Miss Gregory soothed her nerves with cheering whispers. This experience cemented the friendship between the girl and woman more closely.

"Never mind, Child," Miss Gregory whispered. "Go to sleep. In the morning there'll be mail for you and you'll be happy."

As she spoke a great maltese cat, which had followed his mistress as was its custom, climbed to the girl's arms and began to purr softly, at the same time rubbing its

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nose against Lida's hand in a friendly way.

"There, now!" whispered Miss Gregory. "You're surely one of the family. See! Mopsie has adopted you and he's very particular as to his friendships. There aren't five girls in the school with whom he's on such friendly terms as he is with you at this moment."

Involuntarily the girl's hand moved over the fur of the cat's back and smiles replaced the tears. The cat, as if to prove his entire friendliness turned then lay down contentedly on Lida's arm to sleep under the stroking of the girl's hand.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Miss Gregory. "I'll soon be jealous of you, Miss Lauriston. Mopsie never sleeps in any arm but mine." With that she kissed the girl tenderly on the cheek again. Lida held the hand to her cheek as she replied:

"I love you. You're kind and your kiss was just like my mother's used to be."

"You poor child!" was all Miss Gregory could say, though her heart was full of tenderness. "What you need is loving — and you'll have it."

As she spoke a flood of full harvest moonlight filled the room, enveloping the three, it seemed a place of enchantment and in this enchantment Lida soon slumbered her lonesomeness forgotten while the elderly woman's thoughts retraced the years to the time when she was a girl at school, her mind as flooded with the memories as the room was of moonlight. As the girl slept she tiptoed gently from the room back to her own apartment where she sat

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for many minutes gazing out of her window into the soft silvery-dewed night while memory conjured up romance after romance of other days.

Miss Gregory's predictions of letters for the following morning were true for when Lida awoke with the sun, refreshed as if out of a very pleasant dream, two letters on her dressing table attracted her. With a bound of gladness and pleased exclamations she was out of her bed and kissing the envelopes in an abandonment of joy as she noted that both were from her father. Feverishly she opened both before reading either. One told of his arrival in New York and of his meeting with old friends whom he had not seen for years and the other mere personal, telling of his loneliness for her and his solicitation for her ease and health. It was truly a paternal letter, full of tenderness and cheer. Also was enclosed a check for spending money.

Miss Gregory was waiting in the doorway of her apartment as Lida started down the hall toward the stairway leading to the dining room when the summons for breakfast came. The former was wondering how the girl would act toward her after a night's rest; whether the experience of the evening had impressed the girl as it had her. Impulsively as Lida espied the matron she rushed to her and threw her arms about the woman in a girlish embrace. Involuntarily Miss Gregory gently placed the girl's head on her shoulder where it rested for a moment then the two started down the stairway together, Lida telling of her letters and the check.

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"I suppose you'd like to make a shopping trip after breakfast," was her smiling comment.

"I'd love to," was the enthusiastic reply.

"Very well, we'll organize a party and I'll chaperone you."

In the dining room the plan was announced and the invitation extended to any of the girls who wished to accompany them. Breakfast was replete with chatter relative to the tour and when the meal ended there were several who expressed a wish to go. The group started and by a ten minute walk down the hill on which the University stood they were in the shopping district and soon absorbed in their tour.

With the party was a girl who had been three years at the school, Louise Comstock, whose room was opposite that of Lida's and who because of being neighbors with the girl had been her most intimate companion about the school. These two made but small purchases on the trip and soon wearied of walking from store to store. Both she and Lida wished to return to the school or to simply walk about the streets down town. The others in the party, however, demurred, and after some debate it was decided by Miss Gregory that Miss Comstock and Lida should return to their rooms, the older girl being in charge of the newer.

The groups then separated at the Arcade, the two retracing their steps while the remainder of the party continued their shopping. Lida and Miss Comstock had reached Market Square and were chattering in delightfully girlish

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unmindfulness, greeting other passing and re-passing groups of girls bent on similar errands. From time to time parties met and collected here and there obstructing the sidewalk and overflowing into the street busy in their world of youth and education, hailing and greeting each other, waving hands and smilingly exchanging introductions oblivious to all except their little worlds. Youth is all self center whether it is boy or girl youth and particularly college or higher school youth.

The scene was merry with a merriness that was infectious. Even staid business men were forced to smile patiently as youthful femininity elbowed them off the sidewalks and into the street in blissful thoughtlessness; others, accustomed to all this and similar scenes year after year paused in their peregrinations to recall days when they were equally full of vibrant life, health and optimism. The square was filled with happiness and smiles. Even the blue-coated police who seemed unusually numerous in the Square seemed happy.

Also the blue, undulating bay seemed to smile in the sunlight; to smile back to rows of hucksters whose teams flanked the bridge at the right and who hawked their wares to the passerby with varying tones and syllables that added to the crescendo of vocal utterances to be heard.

As the two girls started across the square for the climb up the hill to the school, from their left and around a corner from the direction of the railway station came the sound of band music and the tread of marching feet.

CHAPTER III

Youth always dislikes to miss any entertainment, even such minor amusement as a small parade, being able to extract excitement from the dullest of marching bodies. Lida and her companion were no exception. At the sound of the music one clutched the arm of the other as the two paused.

"Oh, listen," cried the older girl. "A band! — Some parade. Oh, Goody! we'll see some fun. That's ripping! We'll have something to tell the other girls."

Lida's heart was full of expectancy also. There are few parades in the country and none with martial music, particularly in the South. For this reason, though she had witnessed some parades, on circus days when she had gone to Lexington, near her home for a visit, the music of this band was so lively and the occasion so unique in her life that she was almost in an hysterically excited state.

The two girls stood arm in arm, listening in eagerness while the noise of the parade approached but was as yet unseen, around a further corner of the square. As they stood, a band behind a large American flag, came into view. Accompanying this flag was another emblem of the organization of street car men. A banner announced that they were on strike and were parading to their hall for a meeting.

On they came, into the square till the entire body, some five hundred of them were in view. As the head of the procession reached the square proper they were met by a

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squad of police who attempted to turn them back. The procession halted then started again. As it did so the police were seen to rush them. This precipitated a riot and soon the square was a mass of yelling, pushing, surging, fighting humanity.

Women and girls who had been caught in the mass, by the suddenness of the shift from peace to war were struggling, screaming, fainting and adding to the hubbub. The sickening dull blows of club against cracking skulls, the thud of fists against faces and bodies increased the melée and confusion. Where a few moments before there was law and order, peace and harmony, now the beast in man was raging and the law of the brute fought for mastery. In the midst of this riot suddenly revolvers began to bark their shots. Panic seized the weaker hearted of those in the throng.

At the beginning Lida and her companion failed to comprehend the seriousness of their predicament and stood so long gazing at the spectacle that before they fully sensed their danger they had been swept from the sidewalk and into the midst of the whirling, swirling, fighting mass. Indignation at their predicament and their inability to free themselves as well as the spirit of battle that now seemed to grip all, caused them to forget the refining influences that had been theirs and they battled back with those about them till they were so tightly hemmed in by the jam that their efforts were futile. They were fast becoming as hysterical as those about them, losing their saner senses, appreciation of their dangers overwhelming them.

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As they struggled a cobblestone swirled over Lida's shoulder and crashed against the skull of a citizen who immediately lost consciousness and slumped, though the compactness of the crowd about him prevented his body for a moment or so from falling to the paving where it was later trampled into an unrecognizable mass.

Both girls now began screaming as the horror of their predicament grew. In the midst of the confusion, just as Lida was losing control of her senses and becoming entirely mad she was conscious of a strong voice over her shoulder.

"I'll protect you, ladies," it said. "Don't get nervous. Don't get nervous. Steady now! Steady!"

There was something so commanding about the voice; something so vibrant, confident and reassuring that Lida's courage which had been forsaking her began to return. She tried to see who was behind her but failed. The soothing positiveness of the assertions she heard was restoring to her a calmness that a few moments before she was ready to believe was impossible. Her companion, however, was still screaming and battling.

Before she could collect her senses further the voice commanded, still in that vibrant calm assured tone:

"Turn about now. Turn till you face me."

The voice seemed now to be having the same effect on Miss Comstock as it had on Lida for she ceased to scream. Both girls, with every sway and twist of the crowd wrenched their bodies till they were turned in the direction they had been commanded to take. With each give and surge of the crowd they gained more freedom of move-

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ment. When turned completely about they clung to each other desperately and looked for the face of their rescuer. His back was now turned to them but he talked to them over his shoulder.

"Now catch my coat and cling for life. Don't let go for anything, and keep behind me," he shouted.

The girls battled till they were pressed closely against his back; so closely that they breathed with difficulty. He waited till he felt the clutch at his coat and the clinging arm about his waist. Tall of shoulders and ruggedly set up he was almost complete protection for the girls on their front. As they clung frantically to him he started to make a path through the fighting mass. Fists were flying and blows were aimed in promiscuous as well as disinterestedly generous profusion at the head of the young man who acted as their protector.

Lida was self-possessed enough by now, thanks to the healthy outdoor life to which she had been bred that her nervousness was leaving her. They moved toward the outer edge of the crowd with slow, disputed steps. Lida looked up at her protector and marvelled at the coolness with which he fought for them; how he parried blows aimed for him and through it all waded toward the rim of the mass and safety.

Twice his head was tilted back by the blows which were rained on him. Once Lida felt his progress halted and his body tremble. She thought he was about to sink and inwardly uttered a prayer for strength for him. His dark almost curly hair, which fell about his face was shaken

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back from his brow again and again by blows. Being taller than most of those about him he was a target for almost every other fighting man. Police clubs swung at him at the same time that fist blows came his way. He parried them all with the deftness of a ring master but never faltered in his advance toward the safety zone.

Once a giant fist landed a bone-cracking blow against his chin and his head sank to his breast for an instant but was raised again. The blow bruised the flesh and blood flowed freely in a slow stream from the open wound. He shook his head and Lida felt a drop of the warm fluid on her cheek. It was a disagreeable sensation but she dare not release her grip to remove it and in an instant forgot it.

At that moment she was conscious of more freedom of movement and realized that they were almost free. A few steps more and what had seemed hours but had really been but a few minutes ended; they were approaching the wall of a tall building. Willing hands, at the outer edge of the mass reached for them and pulled them free. As she became aware of this a heavy stone came hurtling through the air from the midst of the mass and straight for the man rescuing them. She shrank herself and tried to shout a warning but could utter no syllable. She heard the crash of the stone for she had closed her eyes from the sight, and felt the body of the man weaken. She pressed him more tightly about the waist as if to hold him in support. He faltered an instant. The pressure of her arm seemed to revive him. He struggled on. A moment more and they were safe. The girls still clung to him, however.

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Without a word he rushed them along the side of the building to which they had come and to a drug store on a further corner, through the rear entrance of that and again into the street but beyond the riot zone. As they emerged from the store a taxicab was passing. The driver was seeking safety, fearing the mob would soon turn that way. Without preliminaries the young man halted the cab, opened the door, hurried the girls into it, shouting:

"East side! — East Side! Quick!"

The driver pulled his levers and drove rapidly up the hill past the University and toward the vicinity of Miss Gregory's school. The girls were still in such a frantic state of hysteria, though subdued, that when the cab halted they feared another assault. Asked where they wished to be driven, Lida who was the more composed of the two decided they would walk, having seen the school cupola a few streets away. Their rescuer started to accompany them but they demurred. Miss Comstock, who had been weeping silently regained self control as they walked away. The driver realizing that the young man was in need of medical attention turned on the power and hurried to find a physician.

The simple life of the Southern country girl had given her a constitution to which "nerves" were unknown. Due to this she was the more composed of the two girls, the less shaken as they started down the street to the school entrance. Miss Comstock seemed to sense this strength and clung shiveringly to Lida's arm. The latter was the first to speak. "Wasn't it awful?" she commented, half mus-

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ingly. Her companion shuddered and clung to the arm she had grasped.

"A street fight." Lida continued, her mind retracing the events. "I wonder what it was all about? — I surely thought we'd be killed — and we would have had it not been for him — Oh!" she cried, standing still at the new thought that intruded.

"Oh! we didn't get his name. — How rude! — and he was hurt too." Then turning to Miss Comstock. "Did you see how his head was bleeding. Poor man. He must be frightfully hurt."

She suddenly pictured again the flying stone as it crashed against their rescuer's head. Her heart filled with stifling pain. She too began to weep as she recalled their struggle to reach safety and the risk this unknown man had run to save them, hysterical reaction forcing the tears and sobs.

"I shall love him all my life — love him and no other man." She vowed amid her tears.

Miss Comstock, who was now regaining her composure proved consoling as she offered: "He certainly was brave to risk his life for us in that mob. — Did you see his face? — Such deep brown eyes — such a smile — and such courage! — I wonder who he is! His face seemed familiar."

"Poor man! We were a pair of selfish sillies not to think of getting his name so we could thank him. Thanks would be such small pay, though, for what he did for us. It's perhaps better that we don't thank him."

"I wonder if he was badly hurt?" Miss Comstock asked sorrowfully.

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"Badly hurt. Poor — poor man! He's k-k-killed" Lida sobbed sympathetically as she thought of and analyzed the struggle, recalling the blows she knew struck his head and shoulders. "I hate mobs!" she exclaimed vehemently. "Mobs are such brutal things. Why do men fight and kill anyway?"

Miss Comstock looked at her companion. "Why, I thought you people in the South were used to mobs" she said.

"Oh, they don't count. Only niggers get hurt in them. Besides my folks don't indulge in those things. Southern mobs are composed of the poor, the rough and the people new to the country. The better class whites are above that sort of thing. I hate those mobs too, she added. A mob's a mob and savage at the heart whether South or North, in America or Timbuctoo."

The girls had now reached the school and were soon detailing the story of their experiences, to the teachers and girls who gathered about them, having noted the disarray of their clothing. Lida's hat had been entirely lost and her hair tumbled about her face, her waist and skirt almost in ribbons and Miss Comstock in almost the same condition.

They were still in the midst of their recital which had been freely interspersed with spasms of weeping as they recalled frightful portions of their experiences. They talked alternately, at the same time and sometimes with a half dozen chattering at once but all being understood

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when Miss Gregory and the others who had made the trip burst in on them.

"Oh, my girls!" she exploded as she gathered them both weepingly in her arms, "I'm so relieved — so relieved." With this she kissed them both in her excess of emotion as she held them. "I'm so glad you reached home. I was afraid you had been caught in that mob down street and either hurt or killed. We just missed being caught in it ourselves and saw ambulances rushing wounded to hospitals and stations. Wasn't it awful? — Such fighting I never saw. There was no regard for women and children or anything else. I'm so glad you escaped and were not in it."

"Oh, but they were," one of the girls answered. "They had the thrillingest experience imaginable. Even to being rescued by a handsome hero. I envy them." At this everybody burst into laughter thus banishing another approaching storm of weeping. "They were just telling us about it when you returned." The speaker continued.

"What?" exclaimed Miss Gregory, as she held each girl off at arm's length and inspected them, fear in her heart again. "Were you hurt? Were you hurt," she asked frantically anxious. "Oh, why did I let you leave us! — Why did I? — Think what might have happened!"

"Oh, but we're all right now," Lida volunteered. "—A little shaken but that's all."

At this Miss Gregory became authoritative again. "Get right to your rooms, Girls" she commanded to those who had been grouped about Lida and Miss Comstock. "Right

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to your rooms and prepare for dinner." As she spoke she ushered the two girls into her study to question them concerning their experiences. Both young women assured her they were whole of bones and had now recovered from their nervousness. As she heard this Miss Gregory exclaimed:

"I shall never allow two of my girls to travel alone again."

CHAPTER IV

Truman Bennet was so weakened from loss of blood and dizziness due to the last blow he had received before he rushed the girls to safety that he feared he would faint while they were in the cab with him. It was only exercise of the giant will within him that he held control of himself till the girls had left him. Had he not been afraid of distressing them with his wounds he would not have allowed them to quit the carriage till safely at their homes. As it was when they turned from him, as he watched them down the street, he smiled weakly for an instant then the world blackened and his eyes became sightless while his body slumped to the street, his knees crumpling under him.

He knew not how long he had remained unconscious. It seemed eternities, suddenly he opened his eyes again and reached his hands to his head as if to ease the pain just above his ear. He felt the soft blood-matted sticky wound and remembered again. He struggled to his feet but slumped again, this time barely being conscious of the face of the cab driver looking back at him.

When he regained consciousness again he was on the operating table in the relief station to which he had been rushed by the cab driver and was being bandaged as a kindly doctor who had heard the cab driver's story was saying:

"Young man, you came very near to being a dead hero at this time. You'd better thank your lucky stars you have been getting your football training at the University.

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Almost any other man would have been dead. I suppose the picture of that pretty face you rescued kept you up.— Now the romance begins.”

Truman continued to follow the movements of the physician but only half consciously, not yet realizing that it was Dr. Bayard Tansey, Physical Director of the University who was speaking.

Dr. Tansey continued to talk smilingly. “You, I’m talking to. Look at me with those brown eyes. I suppose you only see the face of a pretty girl now. All men are like that. Go daffy for a pretty face then wake up after they married.— You’ll do the same as the rest, if I get you well. Guess I’ll let you die.— No, on second thought, if you die you won’t know what I know about women and every man ought to know at least as much.— Besides they need you on the football squad yet awhile.” He was just about to be puzzled at the still silent gazing eyes and to wonder if there was not a blood clot on the brain which paralyzed his patient’s senses when a film which seemed to envelop Truman’s head faded away and intelligence came.

Dr. Tansey noted the change. “Ah, I thought I’d bring you to after awhile. You had a narrow squawk, boy. Here taste this.” He held a medicine dropper to the patient’s lips. The pungent fluid cleared away all the mental clouds and Truman tried to rise.

“Steady, now. Not so fast.” Dr. Tansey stepped to the table and gently pressed Bennet back to his reclining posi-

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tion as he spoke. "You mustn't do that," he continued. "You'll spoil all my plans for you."

Bennet again essayed to rise, the effect of the drops administered to him now having fully cleared his brain. With the attempt, however, he felt a stinging pain in his head, lifted his hand to ease it and slowly pulled it away as he touched the huge bandages in which his head was swathed.

"What's the matter, Doctor?" he asked.

"Nothing, only I've just saved St. Peter the disagreeable task of kicking a perfectly good athlete out of Heaven and preserved real promising football material from a burning."

"Yes, I know all that rot but what am I doing here? and where's the girl — where's the mob — who hit me with that brick?"

"Ah," exclaimed the doctor. "I know you're better now. You're a poor hero, even if you did do a good job in rescuing two pretty girls out of a pretty mess."

"Two girls! — Two girls! — Why, I only saw one." Bennet answered his brain now flashing back pictures of the mob and the struggle.

"All the same — two or one — what does it matter?" the doctor replied shaking his head in a whimsical manner. "You're a lost child now Bennet. You saw beauty in distress, looked into her soulful eyes — and yielded to Circe's power — plunged into a fight that was none of your affair, — got your head cracked — and you'll be loony

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for the remainder of your life. All for a girl — a skirt — a woman with large blue dreamy eyes.—

“Oh, don’t deny it,” he continued as Bennet raised a hand to protest and defend the girl, though still weak from the battle, the loss of blood and the operation. “— I got it all from your ravings while under the anaesthetic and I was operating, and from your cabby. Boy! your constitution’s iron, I guess. You raved like a mad one over the girl.”

“By jove, Doctor Tansey, she was worth all the risk. You ought have seen her. — A Hebe — a Juno — a Minerva — A — a — a — goddess. That’s it Doctor, a goddess.” Bennet’s eyes sparkled as he pictured the girl in his mind.

Dr. Tansey, the idol of the football team, in fact of all the athletes at the University, burst into loud laughter at this. Beneath his exterior of sarcasm and raillery all those who came in contact with him at the emergency hospital knew he was a man of sympathy for youth, particularly youth suffering from injury. He adopted this attitude toward those young men who came to him from the football, baseball, track field or the gymnasium on the hill with their injuries in order to test their sincerity, their vitality and their spunk.

At the outburst of Bennet’s he was pleased for he knew that the vitality of this young swarthy giant of manhood had not been sapped to danger point and that recovery would be rapid. Even his chin hidden by an imperial cut of hirsute adornment seemed to reflect the joy he felt at

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the discovery that Bennet was not in danger any longer. He had formed a special liking for this black-haired foreign looking American and there was more than ordinary joy in his laughter when he exploded after Bennet finished speaking of the girl. He raised his hands above his head in token of surrender, as he exclaimed:

“Gone, gone, gone! Completely gone! Goodbye Bennet. That blow on the head set you off completely. It knocked the man out of you and turned you into a fool lover. I suppose you’ll be off your game for the remainder of the season and you’ll be mooning up and down the street in front of Miss Gregory’s school from now —”

Bennet almost set up from the chair on which he was still reclining at the words.

“That’s where she’s from? That’s where she’s from?” he asked. Dr. Tansey gave no answer. “I know it! I know it!” “— Doctor take me to a ward — Please take me to a ward. — How long shall I be here? — That’s it. That’s it!”

Dr. Tansey was replacing his scalpels in their case after carefully cleansing them. He was so deliberate in his movements as to be almost tantalizing. As he placed the last one in its place and folded the case he looked at Bennet and there was approval in his eyes. The blood was flushing the latter’s face again. Dr. Tansey walked over to the chair, took a wrist in his hand and counted the pulse.

“You’ll——never——be” he was tormentingly deliberate, “cured.” He looked at Bennet to see the effect of the words and when he saw the disappointed look in

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the boy's eyes, he added "— till — you're married to her." With that he burst into laughter again and pressed the hand he held in warm friendship.

Bennet gave the hand a returning grip then a twinkle came into his eyes and he said "Bring her on and I'll marry her now."

"Now I know you're hopelessly foolish," Dr. Tansey replied. "No man in his senses would be willing to marry a girl when he had no prospect ahead of him and at the start of his senior year in college. And if I thought you meant any such thing as that I'd go get that brick that laid you out and present it to you again."

Bennet was no longer listening to the doctor, however. His mind was searching out the girl. Exhaustion was creeping over him also, and he began drifting off to sleep as the physician and an attendant whom he had now summoned trundled the wounded youth off to his ward. As Bennet was being lifted into his bed Dr. Tansey, immaculate in his suit of white duck eased the bandages about the wounded man's head, whose eyes were becoming more and more drowsy as he half muttered: "Get me well, quickly, Doctor. She's a queen."

It was several weeks before Bennet was sufficiently recovered to leave the hospital and return to college and several weeks longer before he was able to take part in the football contests scheduled for that fall. He was greatly missed by the entire team. The strike had long since been settled and the clash of police and workmen almost forgotten. So rapidly do human events follow one another.

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Those incidents in our lives that shock us today are gone and forgotten tomorrow. All adding to the sum of life and experience; all making history as we move toward eternity.

CHAPTER V

There was one place, however, where the scenes of that day were never forgotten and among the girls of Miss Gregory's school the incidents were told and retold with romantic variations and speculations. To Lida mention of the day's events were becoming seemingly distasteful for she would never speak of them; but away from her studies and in her room, alone, the pictures of that scene ever recurred and with the picture came the image of her hero of the occasion.

She wondered what had become of him; whether he had died of his wounds, whether he had recovered; who he was and why she had never met him again to thank him in person. Often she pictured to herself scenes in which they met and she had thanked him for his bravery. At such times a crimson flush tinted her cheeks and suffused her neck clear to the shoulders as she shyly thought of actions her heart told her she might be led to perform in her gratitude. Constant picturing of these scenes had created in her a shy distrust of herself and a constant conflicting struggle for and against such a meeting. If they ever did meet again she hoped it would be by accident and she would be taken unawares for otherwise she felt she would run from the meeting.

As thoughts of his condition came to her she would be filled with pity at the memory of his wounds. This pity more and more often awakened tender thoughts and she wished she might have been near to nurse him, to care for

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his wounds and to show by nursing how she appreciated his unselfish efforts to rescue them.

When pity awakens tender thoughts love is just over the fence within easy call. So when these moments of pitying came Bennet loomed to her as an unknown hero and she treasured the thoughts in her heart as a girlish romance too sacred to be disclosed. Hence it was that all reference to the events of that day became outwardly distasteful to her; so seemingly distasteful that her schoolmates ceased to attempt to discuss them with her.

To all the girls of the school the events of that day were sources of wonderful romances. Each treasured the stories told in her heart and pictured herself enviously as the heroine of the occasion. While Lida refused to allow herself to be drawn out and to expose the inward dreams of her heart for general discussion, not so Louise Comstock. Though she confessed she was too excited and distracted to see who it was who rescued them she knew he was big and strong and dark and foreign looking and that was enough for her. She was frank in her expressions of love for him and delighted in picturing meetings with this unknown hero. Also she felt a growing conviction that she knew him.

Each night at the hour for retirement a group of girls would gather in one of their rooms, and in the darkness or under the moonlight which they allowed to shimmer through their curtained windows they would build romance upon romance with themselves as heroines and the unknown rescuer as hero.

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"When I marry him," Louise Comstock announced one night as the girls were gathered in her room and were romancing, "I'll not let one of you girls come to the wedding. I'd be afraid of you all. I'd be jealous."

"Why, Louise!" several exclaimed at once.

"Yes, I'm too ravenously in love with him to let you girls have a look at him."

That was as much as she had opportunity to announce for all the girls pounced on her with sofa pillows, sheets, cushions and whatever soft thing they could battle with and soon Louise was being smothered beneath an avalanche of feathers while all the girls were screaming and laughing with the fun. So furious was the battle that Miss Gregory was called from her suite by the noise to subdue them.

Lida, who had been soundly sleeping, wandering amid pleasant dreams was awakened by the noise and commotion. As she roused the moon from a bright October sky flooded the room with its silver sheen that was almost a dreamlike day. The great pale disk, round and bright as only a harvest moon can be, was almost over head, causing the still clinging autumn leaves of the elms whose branches spread from sidewalk to sidewalk to make a dark fairy bower beneath them on the street. Through these falling leaves, now thinning with the accumulations of frost there danced and sparkled on the street little bright silver patches between the dark.

When the girls had been quieted Lida tried again to close her eyes and sleep but the brightness of the moon, the

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clearness of the sky showing through the treetops, and the quietness of the street all seemed to cast a dream spell over her that she could not overcome. Casting a robe about her and gathering some cushions about her feet she drew a chair and sat by the window looking out on the dew-sprinkled lawn and the street along which it ran till her gaze trailed itself out into the distant sky where only a few stars twinkled; and out where her thoughts could roam at will.

There was an entrancing stillness about the night with all the earth in slumber, the whole scene spreading out like some fairy garden over which some witching spell had been cast. As she sat, there came over her a loneliness, a dreaminess, that caused her to sigh aloud. Her heart seemed especially filled with tenderness and pity tonight as she sat, her elbows on the sill, her hands cupped and her chin resting in them, a lone teardrop hanging like pearls at the corner of each eye. A breeze, gentle and almost warm rustled the light silken sleeves of her gown and the lacy trimmings at her throat. Almost unconsciously her voice gave sound to the thoughts running through her mind.

"I wonder," she sighed, "if we'll ever meet? — I'd just like to tell him how much I thank him — He's the hero of my heart — and always will be. — Oh, I wonder if he's dead — Poor man." At this thought she bowed her head and wept silently. As she bowed her head in tears a figure at the base of the great elm near her window stirred as if to move. It was not the intention of the figure to play

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eavesdropper on a girl. As the figure moved the girl raised her head again. The figure hid behind the trunk of the tree again. To move would have been cruel to the girl as well as to have disclosed himself in a despicable act. One impulse prompted him to bolt and run while the delicate sense of honor and sympathy also cautioned him that to move would have been to disclose to the girl that she had been overheard and to have caused her shame. He decided to remain hidden and to preserve the secret of her anguish.

"I am so lonely." Lida sighed. "So lonely without love. Without his love. I love him. I do love him. I wonder if he lives. I'd give the world to know if he ever thinks of me — if he's dead. He can't be dead though, for some sense would have told me."

It is the first impulse of human beings when they have been religiously taught, when in the midst of great emotions; in the face of great difficulties and in the face of great crises in their lives, if never before, to pray. The first prompting of Lida's heart in her mood was to pray and she lifted her face to the sky as she uttered the words:

"Oh God, Thou knowest my heart; Thou hast given me love; give me the one I love."

The first impulse of Truman Bennet, for it was he who stood beneath her window, was to disclose himself. He realized, however, that he was in the presence of too deep a sentiment, too sincere an emotion and too reverent an occasion to spoil it all by disclosing himself, however much his heart leaped with gladness at the discovery that the

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feelings that prompted him were also so deeply moving the girl on whom his heart had set itself. He longed to make himself known yet felt the impropriety of intrusion on such a sacred hour in the girl's life and on such a sacred event. He resolved to treasure this maiden's secret, however, and never to take advantage of the knowledge he had gained that he was loved by her.

"I shall prove ever worthy of that love, though I never attain it, so help me God" he solemnly swore.

As if her prayer was answered there stole over Lida a calmness and serenity that was like the night itself. Her soul seemed satisfied and after drinking in the blissfulness of the night scene a few moments longer she sighed audibly then slowly closed the shutters and retired, to peaceful slumber.

Truman Bennet when he was able to leave the hospital had lived, dreamed and hoped for nothing so much as to meet the girl he had rescued and become acquainted with her. Having learned from Doctor Tansey's conversation that she was a pupil at Miss Gregory's school he had ended his evenings by strolling by the great school and its high stone walls hoping for another glimpse of the face that haunted him, or for a chance meeting that would make them acquaintances. It was on one such errand as this that brought him alone and lonesome by the school this night when the girls were at their pranks and Lida had awakened. As the figure stirred and the shutters opened to the night he was so selfconscious of his errand that he thought it must be known to someone in the school

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and that this person had opened the window to tell him to move along and mind his own business; also not to be lurking about the school like a thief in the night. This was the thought that prompted him to step behind the trunk of the friendly elm and hide himself from view. Having hidden himself when he discovered the girl in her musings he realized what a shameful though unintentional predicament it was in which he was placed and the embarrassment of the girl should he disclose himself, so when the panic of his soul subsided he reasoned that it were better to remain hidden than to be the cause of any discomfiture to the girl.

As he realized the state of the girl's heart toward him the last vestige of youth in him vanished and in its stead came manhood. So do events shape and reshape our beings; so do we rise or fall to meet circumstances. Those who have the character measure up to events that confront them, and those who lack that character to measure up, shrivel and dwindle. It is by such as this that we succeed or fail.

Truman Bennet walked on air as he returned to his room that night. Yet the seriousness of realizing that he had the heart of a girl in his keeping even though unpledged and undisclosed sobered his happiness and caused him to sit by his window long hours before he retired for sleep. He debated with himself what his course under the circumstances should be.

"Shall I," he asked himself, "go to this girl whom I love and confess my love then ask for hers, or shall I keep

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silent? What would I have done had I met her. What a fool I was to go near that school. What a fool I am any way! How can I love or let myself love when I have my way to make. To confess that I was within hearing of her voice would be to lose me whatever chance I might have. She would consider me a cad and rightly. No, I could never do that. She would have nothing to do with me then. No, the only thing I can do is to trust to chance. I love her, though. Love her with all the being in me.

“I wonder if she would understand? I doubt it. She seems a timid thing; and yet no, she is not timid. What shall I do? I don't know. Yet they say, ‘faint heart ne'er won fair lady.’—I guess I'll let circumstances guide me. No, that's shirking. Ah, I have it. I shall pass her window again each night and some night when she's awake I'll begin to talk as if to myself and tell her who I am and that I love her. Perhaps she'll understand then and if she really meant what she said tonight I'll know then I can act. If she really loves me, boy, oh boy, the world is mine!”

That weighty question settled to the satisfaction of youth Bennet was soon abed and asleep. He awoke several hours later refreshed and with a song in his heart. Youth always sings in the morning hours. It seems appropriate. Youth is morning and morning the youth of the day—so youth, song and morning go hand in hand. With Bennet's first waking hour came the picture of the scene witnessed the evening previous. The memory filled him with happy dreams again and as he pictured the form at

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the window, leaning out into the dewy night while the soft wind was causing Lida's long loosely combed hair to wave back and forth about her neck and throat the vow he had overheard so filled him with joy that his eyes filled with tears of pain. He looked from the window of his room into which the sun was shining but saw only the silver moonlight of the night before and the image at the window.

"Oh, God, how I love her!" He exclaimed fervently while tears filled his eyes. "What a wonder girl." His thoughts became seriously sobered again as he added, "God help me to prove a man to her. May I never fail her!"

Truman Bennet's injuries had been so serious that his services were practically lost to the team for the season and by the time he was in condition to play the season was over. His mental state, also was such as to cause Dr. Tansey to deny permission for him to enter into any of the contests. With nothing to do but study and dream of Lida, Bennet found himself each night strolling by the window from which the girl's confession had been made, hoping for another glimpse of her yet fearing to be seen lest he be recognized.

There was no chance for a meeting since he knew none of the girls at Miss Gregory's school and had no chance for an introduction. His soul was agonized alternately with despair and hope. Fortune smiled on Bennet, however, most unexpectedly.

CHAPTER VI

Both schools had now settled down to the routine of book life for the winter when announcement at the college and at Miss Gregory's school told of the reception to the President of the college, an annual affair to which the girls of the school were usually invited.

This first social function of the year for the college was usually a bore to most of the professors and the students alike. While informal, there were so many strangers among the Freshmen and guests, there was little chance for making acquaintances. Those who attended, in the large reception room of the common dining hall, appropriately draped for the event, sought little groups here and there to renew acquaintance or to be introduced to newer comers.

Except for the professors and teachers who came from year to year and the older of the students the entire affair was dull. Some of the younger classmen tried to dance after being presented to partners, others sat off in corners talking light conversational chatter. Bennet was just being bored with the affair and preparing to greet the President then leave when he thought, "Ah, she might come. She's new and some of the girls may bring her. Perhaps I'd better wait."

He was about to pass into an adjoining room to seek a corner from which he could watch the door when he was halted by a call from Dean Ira Sandager.

"Here, just a moment, Bennet," he beckoned. Bennet turned to the speaker who stood in a small group and

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walked over to Dean Sandager. The latter taking the young man by the arm drew him into the group beside him, smiling. "You've met my friends?" Dean Sandager asked bowing toward those standing with him. Bennet smiled as a young man and two young women greeted him with outstretched hand, at the same time exclaiming, "hello, Bennet" the girls merely nodded.

"Oh, yes, we've met," Bennet laughingly shook hands.

One of the young women of the group stood partially facing another group with whom she was speaking. She heard the voice of the newcomer and instinctively turned.

As she did so her eyes met those of Bennet. Both were unguarded in their meeting. A vivid crimson colored Lida Lauriston's face for an instant then she blanched as her eyes drooped. Bennet almost gasped in his surprise, the smile waning on his face. There was an awkward stillness for a moment. One of the young ladies in the group, however, turned to Bennet, with:

"Miss Lauriston, I don't believe you've met Mr. Bennet. Miss Lauriston, Mr. Bennet."

Bennet's head was in a whirl. Embarrassment overcame him. He stammered and struggled to master himself. He wanted to extend his hand but resisted. Lida was flustered herself at the surprise of the meeting so suddenly with the man over whom she had often dreamed. The situation was fast becoming awkward when the young woman who spoke first added:

"Miss Lauriston is new here. I'm sure you've never met. — She's here at Miss Gregory's for the first year."

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Bennet inwardly thanked the speaker for the words. It gave him opportunity to recover somewhat. Lida was still silent.

"He's one of our heroes, Miss Lauriston," Dean Sandager offered. "One of our athletes."

"Oh!" was all she could gasp before Dean Sandager continued. "He's off the team this year, because of accident. Got mixed up in that mob of strikers and got hurt. — You remember seeing the stories in the papers. They say he rescued some girls, too. — Never got the straight of it. — Bennet never would talk of it and the papers never identified him or the girls."

He was resting his hand fondly on Bennet's shoulder as he spoke. The latter was embarrassed to perspiration. Lida was too overcome to say anything of what she might and as conversation lagged, Dean Sandager turned to Bennet, with, "Get the ladies some refreshments, Bennet."

Glad of an excuse Bennet turned and was off to do the errand after learning the desires of those in the group. Lida looked after the retreating form of Bennet as he passed behind a grouping of fernery and palms into the refreshment room. On returning all sought seats about the room. Neither Lida nor Bennet was aware of the manner in which they became paired as they thought of the event afterward, but when they started for the side of the room they found themselves together.

Bennet's heart was pounding a tattoo against his coat. He looked helplessly at those ahead of him. Lida too was still embarrassed. There were not seats enough for them

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all together, Lida and Bennet being in the rear were left without.

"You'll have to find seats, Bennet," said Dean Sandager waving a hand. "— Not room here."

"All right, Sir," he answered; then turned toward one of the adjoining rooms. As they started to enter, Lida still embarrassed and feeling that her emotions would be disclosed under the light, exclaimed:

"Oh, let's don't sit here. Let's walk. I can eat my salad walking. I'll feel better. — Let's don't eat. — I don't want to eat."

Bennet was of the same mind and taking the plate she offered placed them on a table while they continued through the rooms to one unoccupied. Neither of them spoke, each glad to be with the other yet afraid to trust to their feelings. Bennet remembering the moonlight scene hesitated, not wishing to remind the girl of the circumstances under which they had met, if she had forgotten and she, remaining silent lest she say too much. She felt, however, that she must thank him. She realized that it was for her to express thanks for the rescue, if the subject was to be mentioned at all. They walked on like two bashful children. At last Lida determined. With a deep intake of breath she began.

"Mr. Bennet!" She paused to control her emotions, all the little speeches she had planned and rehearsed were forgotten as wave after wave of blushes suffused her face. Bennet waited, himself as little under control as she, happy to be with the girl of whom he had been dreaming

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constantly and yet dumb for her very presence. At last Lida continued.

“Mr. Bennet — I have long wanted to know you and to thank you for the service done me that day.”

Bennet longed to take her tenderly in his arms, he had so often pictured the hope of such a right. He mastered the desire, however, remembering that he had sworn not to let her know he had overheard her vow that moonlight fall night. He waved a hand as if to pass the incident off lightly with: “Oh, it was a pleasure to serve you. I am glad I could help.”

“You not only helped, you saved my life. — I can never hope to thank you sufficiently” she said fervently.

“You need not thank me. I would do it over again tonight and willingly.” His voice vibrated like the basso of some stringed instrument.

“That’s noble of you. And I’ll never forget it.” Her voice was sincerity itself.

“I don’t think I’d say never, Miss Lauriston. Never, you know, is a long while — and sometimes, under stress we say things we soon forget — or may wish to forget.”

“But I know myself. Besides your bravery was noble indeed and I’d be mean to forget it. I couldn’t, Mr. Bennet — I couldn’t. I only regret I have no way of showing you how much your noble action means to me.”

“There is a way, Miss Lauriston — a real way — a way I’d appreciate to my dying day.”

“You’ve only to make it known. When I think of the way you struggled to save us; of the mad mob that was

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about us, and of your wound — Oh, it was cruel — cruel — cruel — and to think you did it for two unknown girls.”

“Not for two, Miss Lauriston, but for one — for you.”

This was said in such a solemn tone that the girl, who had been looking off across the wide quadrangle of the campus turned quickly to him. There was a sadness in the tone that was convincing. The emotions that surged in both were two strong for utterance. For reply Lida touched his arm with the gentleness of a zephyr. For some reason Bennet was seized with a feeling of deep depression, as the arm still rested on his sleeve he said:

“There is one way in which you might please me, Miss Lauriston, and that is by permitting us to know real friendship. I hope I don’t ask too much.”

“Why, I already look on you as my friend and you always will be my friend. I could not be anything less.”

“Friendship means something deeper to me than the word ordinarily means. Once a friend, always a friend, with me. Friendship means understanding, sympathy, interpretation of moods, generosity of spirit.”

“It means all that and more to me also. Effort to impart happiness; a sharing of sunshine and clouds of life, loyalty. Those are some of my ideas of friendship and when I say you have my friendship and always will have it those are no idle words.”

With the words they clasped hands. There was suddenly and unconsciously an upturning of her face toward his which looked down toward her. His arms stole about

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her and her head drooped in his simplicity of frankness, to his breast while he whispered:

“Heart of Mine, I love you — I love you — I love you and always will. That is the friendship I want. I always have since first I saw you and I always will. It is not friendship I want — I want love — I want you. I want you as I have wanted nothing else in life.” His voice trembled with deep emotion which overmastered him.

Lida remained motionless for a few moments filled with happiness and the consciousness that her love was returned while tears filled her eyes. Suddenly she said:

“Mr. Bennet, I am a simple girl. I have not been long out in the world. I don’t know the ways of the world. What I said I mean. I have been told that men talk lightly and seldom mean what they say when they talk of love. Your words make me supremely happy for my heart has been yours. Please don’t deceive me. I love you as only an honest true-hearted girl can love and I trust you. I hope my trust is not vain.” This was said so earnestly and honestly Bennet was breathlessly pained. “I suppose it is brazen to be telling you this so frankly but I was brought up to be truthful and natural. You asked for my friendship. It is yours — my heart is yours — I trust you. If you deceive me I shall die. I know so little of the world and its ways. If you don’t really love me, please don’t deceive me. Take back your words and though I’ll never forget them and will love you for them, I’ll forgive you and we’ll part friends.”

As she concluded she looked up at Bennet’s face which

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was still turned to hers. There was infinite tenderness written there. Tenderness that was so strong as to make Lida regret her words. He pressed her head back to where it rested on his breast while he said:

"I know men, these days, speak lightly of love and pledge themselves without meaning to be serious. I am not of that kind. As I honor my mother so I mean my love to be true; so it shall be true. As we live and breathe my heart is yours and always will be. My Love, I love you. Let me whisper it again, I love you and ever will."

"If you really love me" the honesty of her heart in her words, "then night is day to me. There is no world but this in which we live, you and I. Nothing shall come between us. Nothing can come between us. Where you go my heart will be; where you are my dreams will attend you."

"Ah, Love of Mine," Bennet breathed, "those words are sweet. Sweetest I have heard since years ago when my mother used to sing us as children to sleep."

Lida drew a deep intake of breath. "Speaking of mothers" she said, "I have a token I would like to have you wear as emblem of our love and in memory of this night."

"I need no other emblem than your love, Girl of Mine" Bennet whispered.

"Oh, but, Truman—"

"Say that again, please," Bennet interrupted "it sounded so charming coming from your lips."

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"It's my mother's ring, Truman, and I'd like to have you wear it. Just for me."

"I also have my mother's wedding ring. I hope you'll keep it for me and may it guard you as it has me." She touched it to her lips as she answered: "I shall love it—and treasure it."

Lida and Bennet had forgotten time and were only recalled to their senses when Louise Comstock came into the room and exclaimed:

"Oh, Lida, I have found you at last. I've been looking everywhere for you." When she recognized Bennet as Lida's escort a spasm of pain and smiles in combination passed over her face and she turned suddenly back into the great reception room. "Oh!" was the only word she uttered. When next noted by any of her friends she was bidding them goodbye, her wraps about her and her escort waiting.

CHAPTER VII

The spell under which Lida and Bennet had been influenced for the while was now broken and they returned to the reception room in time to see Louise departing. Lida started from Bennet's side toward the girl but before she could reach Louise the latter was halfway down the steps and running for the car which awaited them.

"Why — why — wh — wh — what's the matter with Louise?" Lida asked turning to Bennet. "She never acted like that before."

"I don't know," Bennet replied! "Never mind her, Girl of Mine. You'll see her at the school and perhaps she'll explain. I'm sure I don't know."

"But that's so unlike Louise. I can't understand it. I must go home and see what is the trouble."

Lida was not long in preparing for her departure and as she stepped from the reception room to the vestibule and started down the steps toward Bennet she seemed a queen stepping from some previous century and back into life. Bennet noted the lightness of her step and the happy beauty of her face. His entire being thrilled with gladness at the thought of having her love. Bennet ushered her tenderly into the car and they were off. The distance was so short from college to school that almost before they were seated the automobile in which they were riding drew up at the entrance to the school. They were loath to leave.

"Oh, here so soon?" Lida asked.

"Do you regret the shortness of this our first ride, Girl

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of mine?" asked Truman, again his voice vibrating like some melodic basso string.

"I don't want to go in," she confessed. "I wish we might just ride on and on and on into the night and out of it into the daylight and beyond — anywhere, so long as I'm with you."

"That's noble of you, and I love you all the more for it. The stars of this night are my witnesses. I'll ever take care of you so that you ride only in happiness." Bennet pledged confidently. Youth reckons so little on circumstances and consequences.

At the pledge she touched her head to his breast for an instant, as if silently to drink in the intoxicating experience. "I didn't know love could be so good," she sighed. Her head rested but a moment, however, before the driver had dismounted and was opening the door for them to alight. Bennet lifted her lightly from the car and escorted her up the steps and into the vestibule. There they stood a moment in parting embrace.

"I hate to leave you — Don't go, Truman, my love. I wish we might never part. I hate so to let you go. This is the happiest hour of my life. Do you blame me then for wanting to prolong it?" she asked.

"How could I blame the one I love. If parting be painful to you how much more painful must it be to me. I have been heart hungry for love like yours.

"I'll try to be both mother and sweetheart to you, Truman. — I must say goodnight now and yet I hate to. Good night dear heart—May God's best angels guard you.

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As sleep overtakes me tonight I'll whisper your name, Truman."

"Good night. Heaven has been good to me in giving me you. A gift I shall ever cherish. A gift in which I already feel I am envied. How happy I am!"

"Let's try and temper our happiness, Truman, so it will last. I want our love to last; not be like the love of so many nowadays. With so many it is a case of off with the old love on with the new. I could not love that way. One lasting love mine shall be.—Good night, Dear—and may God keep you."

Bennet, as he reviewed the scene walking to his room failed to recall how he reached the street. His happiness was so intoxicating as to have cheated his memory of the moments intervening between his farewell with Lida and his reaching the sidewalk in front of the school. When he found himself he seemed to be gliding above the sidewalk and not touching the ground at all. This was the beginning of a happiness that continued until long after the holidays and well into the spring term.

This being Bennet's last year in college the lovers busied themselves, between studies, with planning for their home. Prom week came, one of the annual institutions of every New England college, a time when books were forgotten and the heart of youth was the only serious study undertaken. Girls at Miss Gregory's were busy with their party plans, their dresses and their beaux. The engagement of Bennet and Lida was well established in the minds of all the girls despite efforts on the part of the two at concealing

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the fact from the general public. All the girls were aware of the state of affairs with the single exception of the head of the school. With proverbial consistency the only person who should have known most of all of the engagement was the one person who did not, Miss Gregory.

Following the encounter of Louise Comstock with Lida and Bennet at the President's reception intercourse between the two girls was strained and difficult. Lida was so centered in her studies and Bennet, that she gave little heed to the incident and the two girls having no classes together, any personal contact or confidences was easily avoided, particularly since Louise made a very studied effort to escape contact where possible. From the hour of the reception, however, there came over Louise Comstock a mood that changed her from a happy hearted and usually frank girl into a quiet, taciturn and somewhat morose miss.

The occasion for the change disclosed itself, when lessons aside a group of the young women had ensconced themselves in the corner of the great reception room on the main floor of the school, amid a profusion of sofa pillows and were discussing partners and escorts for the dance, the feature of Prom week.

"Paul will be here from Yale, just think of that girls!" chattered one of the group.

"Yes, and Harry will come to take me. He wrote me yesterday that he could get away," spoke up another.

Louise Comstock was just coming into the room from one of the upper floors when several of the girls spoke at once:

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"Who's going to take you, to the dance, Louise?" She hesitated and flushed before speaking. She had had several of the young men from college inviting her to be their guests but had refused them all. She was hoping for an invitation from one, but that one never realized, so never asked her. Pressed for an answer, as the girls grouped themselves about her she waved them aside with only the words, "wait and see."

"Oh, I hate mysteries. Why make one of this, Louise. Come on, be a sport, tell us. I'm not afraid to say, Paul will take me. Harry is to take Madge and we each know who the other girls' fussers are. Who's yours?"

"Wait and see," was all she would answer. With that she departed. When she left, however, there was determination in her mind. It was rather a bold move and she flushed as she determined but decided to go through with it. Going to her room she hastily scribbled a note, donned her wraps and left for the street as if to mail it. She walked toward the men's college and when near there espied a small boy peddling papers.

"Take this note to the address on it — and here's a dime for your trouble."

The urchin took the note in his soiled hands, looked at the dime then read the address and answered, knowingly, "Yes Miss. Any answer?"

"No. Just say I'm waiting" she suggested.

The youngster made his way across the campus to the main college hall and up to Bennet's room. After rapping on the door and being bidden to enter, the boy asked:

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"Is Mr. Bennet here?"

"This is Mr. Bennet," answered Truman at which the note was handed to him. The boy waited while Bennet read:

Dear Mr. Bennet:

I know this is unconventional but I would like a few words with you. I'll be waiting at the main gate.

The Girl you rescued.

At reading the signature Bennet immediately thought of Lida but the note not being in her handwriting he realized it was not she who wished to see him. He had forgotten Louise for the time. He reread the note and stood gazing at it till recalled by the words of the news-boy who was still waiting.

"She's a swell Dame that's waitin' for youze" he volunteered hoping for another tip, knowing from experience the prodigality of college boys, particularly where note carrying was concerned. He was disappointed, however, for Bennet instead of handing him another coin or making any remark got into his hat and coat and strode down the stairs. At the gate he was greeted with an extended hand, and:

"How do you do, Mr. Bennet?"

Bennet raised his hat and smiled, a little bit puzzled; then waited for the girl to speak again.

"I suppose I'm very bold and I've lost in your estimation but I've wanted for ever so long to let you know how grateful I was for the way you came to our rescue that afternoon last fall. At first I did not know who you were,

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and could not thank you; then I have not seen you very much since, and there has been no opportunity."

"Oh, there's no need for thanks, Miss — Miss — Comstock?" He recalled the name at mention of the rescue. "I sincerely hope you are recovered and have not suffered from the experience."

Louise placed her hands over her heart to still the perturbation there but failed. Her breath came in short puffs and confusion suffused her face. She was glad to note that Bennet had not embarrassed her by failing to remember her.

"I shall never forget your bravery, Mr. Bennet — and I can never thank you enough. You don't know how often I wished for the opportunity to personally express my gratitude," she exclaimed. "It never came so I sought it tonight. Do you think the less of me for it?"

"On the contrary I honor you for the frankness you've shown. In these days of flappers and feminism it is thoroughly in keeping with the times that you should act with freedom."

"You'll think me bolder still and less feminine when I tell you that I have a great favor to ask of you" — she touched his arm as she essayed to speak. "Now don't pledge yourself till you know what it is. That wouldn't be fair to you. I have a special reason for asking. — It is that you allow me to be your guest at the dance."

The two had been walking slowly along the twilight brightened street. When she made the request, Bennet halted and faced the girl, surprise almost taking his breath

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away. Bennet thought of Lida then wondered. He looked at the girl at his side and saw only earnestness and sincerity in her face. At first he was on the point of denouncing her but at sight of the seriousness mirrored in her countenance he controlled himself and was all sympathy.

"You can't really mean that, Miss Comstock. You're joking" Bennet managed to say.

"I'm in deep earnest, Mr. Bennet." The tone proved her sincerity.

The solemnity with which the words were uttered and the expression on the girl's face were convincing. They had paused in their walk and stood facing each other. There was a long silence in which the nervous breathing of each could be heard. One could also almost hear the throbbing of the girl's heart. Bennet spoke at last, in his deep vibrant voice.

"Pardon me. I couldn't sense it at first. I'm sorry—very sorry I cannot, however much I like to oblige a lady and relieve her of the embarrassment of such a situation. I would not have had this happen for the world. Why, —don't you know of my engagement — Miss Comstock you can't be serious. I'm engaged to Miss Lida Lauriston. Didn't you know that?"

"Engaged to Lida? Oh-h-h-h—I didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know." At these words the girl was overcome with a fit of weeping for a few moments, great spasms of grief shaking her entire body. Suddenly, with tears blinding her she wheeled and hurriedly — almost ran from him.

CHAPTER VIII

Bennet's heart was full of compassion for the girl and her distress over her disappointment, knowing what depth of feeling must have prompted her to make such a request of him. He returned to his room, a feeling of deep misery enveloping him because of the unavoidable hurt he had given the girl.

Yet what could he do? He tried to discover wherein he had been to blame for placing the girl in such a situation, yet could find no such occasion. True he had known her casually since the previous year when they had met but they had never been in each other's company for more than a few minutes at each time and he had never given her any attention. He felt that he must have been to blame in some way and yet could recall no occasion. He was miserable over the situation, being of high ideals as to his conduct with girls. He puzzled for some time over the situation, as he sat at his desk when he had returned to his room but try as he would to find wherein he was to blame for the situation he could not. His heart was heavy as he retired and for the first time in many weeks closed his eyes without the picture of Lida Lauriston in his mind.

Rage, confusion, humiliation and chagrin surged through Louise Comstock's being as she ran from Bennet and started back for her school. Rage because she had failed to find in him the response she desired; chagrin to think that he loved another girl when she loved him so, con-

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fusion at the thought of the position in which she had placed herself, in his estimation and humiliation at the thought that she must attend the reception, if at all, alone having refused all other invitations hoping to be invited by Bennet. Tears of blinding anger flowed down her cheeks unheeded as she hurried along.

Self pity at her disappointment filled her for a time and then anger returned. It was not anger, however, directed against Bennet. They say Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned but while this may be true Louise found no anger in her heart at this moment against Bennet. Her anger was against the fate that permitted another to have what she sought, a man's heart and love. She reached her room she knew not how, without being observed by any of the other girls and threw herself sobbingly on her bed where she lay for several hours alternately crying softly and groaning in anguish. Bitterness filled her being and for a time she was overwhelmed with desire to die.

She refused to leave her room the following day, remaining all day without food and with the shades drawn, her tears having been exhausted, her anguish having brought upon her a raging headache. When the other girls found she was ill each offered to remain with her and to help in whatever way they could, to relieve her. All their proffers were refused, however.

CHAPTER IX

It was late in the afternoon when Lida heard of the illness of her friend, and with the compassion of one whose heart is filled with love she hurried to her friend's room. Love chastens some persons causing them to feel more deeply the sufferings of others, and it has such an effect on some of those in love that they feel more tenderly toward all suffering. True love, by reflection, so radiates itself that its effects are felt on those even not the direct object of that love. It was so with Lida. She was so completely in love herself that the intoxication of it expanded to take in those about her. It was in this gentle, expanding mood that she approached the door of Louise Comstock's room, turned the knob softly so as not to disturb the girl if she was sleeping and tiptoed gently in and toward the bed.

Menacing calmness had succeeded the spasms of weeping and the paroxysms of grief that had racked the girl's body and mind for the past twenty-four hours and she lay, quiet on her pillow, eyes half closed revolving in her mind a new determination, the idea of which had come to her but shortly before and had given her the relief her emotions needed. Her face was still twisted as if from pain, thus taking on a new aspect, new to the Louise Comstock her companions had known till then. There was something almost diabolic in the smile that saved her face from distortion completely.

Lida approached the bed and was about to speak when

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the reclining girl raised herself on her pillow, resting on an elbow, hair streaming over her shoulders and gown in disarray, eyes dilated to fury dimensions while she pointed to the door.

"Get out of my room — I hate you — I hate you," she almost hissed. "Go-go-go" — she repeated in frenzy.

"No, I won't go, Louise, you poor dear. You're suffering." Lida concluded the girl was out of her mind.

"Go — get out," the reclining girl almost screamed. "I don't want to see you."

"You poor dear. I won't leave you. You're suffering. Won't you tell me what ails you and let me help you?" Lida persisted pityingly.

"I want none of your help — I want none of you" Louise still raged.

Lida wondered what had come of the girl. She was not long in ignorance, however, for Louise continued.

"You've come here to tell me Truman Bennet is to take you to the reception. Come here to gloat over me with your conquest — come here to torment me. Get out — I want nothing to do with you."

Lida was about to speak but the girl interrupted.

"Don't say a word. I know. He told me — You're engaged — you're engaged. Yes, you're engaged but you'll never marry him. You'll only hurt him. Your pride won't let you."

Lida attempted to protest again but the girl raged on.

"You'll never marry him, I say, when you know that

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you're engaged to a man with Negro blood in him. He is a Negro. Do you hear me? He's a Negro."

Lida waited for no more. She bolted from the room and left the girl screaming the words that burned into her ears and into her heart. She knew not what to do. She rushed to her room and locked the door, cast herself on her bed, feeling as if the world was strangling her, smothering her and stifling her. She gasped, clutched at her throat and tossed. She wanted to cry — wanted to think, wanted to scream but was powerless in the grip of what Louise Comstock had said. One moment she thought the girl must be mad, stark mad and the next doubt and the possibility of her words being true sent panic into her soul.

She turned and faced the ceiling, staring wild-eyed, on through the top of the room into space. As never before she was wishing she had a mother to whom she could turn and talk. There was nothing but despair for her. Helpless black despair. What if the words of Louise Comstock were true? What if there was blood of that despised race in his veins. He surely did not look like one with a trace of Negro blood in him. True he did look like a foreigner. As she began to analyze the face and features of Bennet she could detect no trace of Negro blood in him. His swarthiness, however, gave her some cause for doubt. She seemed to be caught in a tangling net of circumstances that was gripping her more and more strongly as she became weaker and weaker. She could not cry. The situation was too appalling for tears. What could she do? As she pondered she pictured, almost for the first time since

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leaving home, Mrs. Cottman as she pronounced the curse on the Lauriston family.

She decided to return to Louise's room and make sure she had heard aright and that the girl was insane. Thought of the possibility of the words being true, however, deterred her. She wrestled with the torturing situation alone. She was on the verge of insanity herself from thinking over the words. Her lips became dry and parched; her room stifling to the point of suffocation.

The hours rushed by and she was still neither near relief nor able to think herself free of the situation. Along toward midnight the moon rose and along with this a slight breeze began to stir. With a sudden gust of wind a shutter at her window swung open and the beams of a soft night - shining moon streamed into the room. As the light came in she recalled the night in the fall when she had prayed from that window to be given the man she loved. As she lived through that scene again relief seemed to come to her and tortures to vanish from her mind.

As they disappeared in their place came a resolution to seek the facts as to Louise's statements from Bennet himself. She felt so sure her worries had been baseless, and the words of her schoolmate those of a raving irresponsible madness, that at last sleep overcame her and she dozed into fitful dreams. The sun was high in the morning sky before she opened her eyes again. When she did, however, her worries returned. Both her heart and head began to pain intensely, maddeningly. The words of her schoolmate again burned themselves so hotly into her soul that

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she sickened at the thought. Doubt as to their truth and fear that they were true surged through her in alternating waves.

When she recalled the so many persons of her own district and section at home who were mulatto or lighter, and who had a trace of Negro blood in them the words of Louise seemed too painfully, torturingly true. She had never given such things a thought before. What was she to do now? She had given her pledged word as well as her heart to this man. What if he was of Negro blood. She felt she could not bear the thought. She, in whose veins ran the proud blood of many of the historic families of her state, blood of colonists, Revolutionary blood, and the blood of the best families of the state.

She wept till she became tearless and intense burning hot pains shot through her temples and eyes. All thought became maddening. She felt she could no longer endure the strain. She must know the truth. So engrossed was she in her problem that she failed to hear the rapping at her door when the maid came three times to arouse her for her classes and so that the room could be tidied up for the day. As noon approached at last the maid became alarmed and notified Miss Gregory. The latter who had also learned of the indisposition of Louise Comstock became alarmed lest an epidemic was about to be discovered in the school. This she dreaded and it was with much apprehension that she hurried to Lida's room.

When Miss Gregory reached the room, however, Lida had returned to her former decision, which was to see

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Bennet and to learn the truth of the accusation from him. Her whole body was in agony; head seeming to split and eyes burning like coals of fire. Miss Gregory, quick to sense the fact that Lida's trouble was mental, in her motherly way went over to the girl and placed an arm about her waist as she tried to comfort her.

"Tell me your trouble, Dear, won't you? I'll help you" she urged.

"No, you can't help me, I'm afraid. I must face this alone." Lida spoke with determination tinged with misgiving and a sense of hopelessness.

The sympathetic, motherly tone, however, brought tears to the hot eyes of the girl again and she burst into a paroxysm of weeping; Miss Gregory gently pulled the head of the weeping girl to her shoulder, and the two sat on the wide divan at the side of the room, the girl weeping and sobbing heartbrokenly.

"Tell me what troubles you, Child; I'll help you. — Don't cry any more," Miss Gregory pleaded in a motherly way.

Lida only shook her head between sobs, however, feeling that she could not confide her trouble to anyone. Her storm of grief passed after a time, and sobs ceased to shake her body as Miss Gregory's calm voice soothed.

"I promised your father I would look after you like a mother, and if you continue to cry your heart out in this manner your father will blame me."

At the mention of her father Lida again felt tears surge to her eyes but bit her lip and fought them back. After

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trying to persuade the girl to confide in her Miss Gregory finally gave up the attempt with:

"Well, nothing is so bad that time will not bring forgetfulness of the pain and if you two girls have quarrelled, since Louise is suffering as you are, then it won't be long before you will be friends again."

She chanced this as a guess, having tried also without success to get the cause of her grief from Louise Comstock and failing as she had in this case, knowing that the two girls had been chums and that they both seemed stricken with the same grief cause. Even this brought no response from Lida as it had none from Louise. The latter, however, held to her secret grief and decided to wait till she could question her lover and hear the truth from his own lips.

College youth knows how to provide places in anticipation of the time and the girl for those little tête-a-têtes which so delight the young heart, and this occasion was no exception. For the dance, the big feature of this special prom week the large gymnasium floor had been transformed into a bower. Tropical potted plants were everywhere in profusion, giving the large hall the appearance of some southern garden, with draperies and bunting completely covering the walls, limbs of fir trees with the green needles pendant, standing guard against the walls while the room at the head of the hall, which was used ordinarily for instructors in classes and as office, was partitioned off with plants behind which the orchestra played music that fairly teased bodies and feet into rhythm. The

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swimming pool, adjoining the gymnasium had been boarded over and here and there little bowers had been erected into which couples could be persuaded with but little effort, between dances, where they could sit and chatter. The wide veranda surrounding two sides of the building on the outside, overlooking the track field had been turned into little paradises also, and it was here that Bennet had planned to have a few moments alone with Lida when she arrived.

He was all expectancy and anticipation. It had become known long ago about the college that he and Lida were engaged and his classmates as well as underclassmen were watching the romance with interest. Being one of the committee of arrangements he was unable to escort Lida to the dance but was on the watch for the taxicab that would bring her and some of the other girls whose escorts were also on the committee.

The worry with which Lida was troubled had made her rather reticent and during the ride to the campus she was silent while her companions chattered and laughed. Her large eyes seemed to have become larger and more blue, her face was pale with a radiance that was almost evanescent. Bennet was on the steps of the gymnasium waiting when the cab arrived and the girls were aided to alight. As she stepped from the cab Lida's heart seemed as if it would choke her with its loud beating. In his evening dress, as he rushed down the steps to meet her, he seemed to her like a Roman deity, joy in her presence radiating from his face, the delight of his love showing in

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his eyes. Her own eyes drooped and for a moment her face flushed as the call of her heart pushed back the evil dreams that had been torturing her for the past few days. She trembled and went weak for a moment, seeming about to sink to her knees.

Bennet's touch revived her strength, however, and her arm rested in his hand as he aided her up the steps and piloted her to the reception room. A dozen eager youths sought dances with her but all were refused though so gently that none felt hurt. As she returned to the dance hall Bennet noted the lines of worry and the darkly circled eyes which drooped and did not meet his in the frank comradly way that had been customary.

"What's the trouble? he asked, gently trying to puzzle out the attitude.

For reply she clung heavily to his arm and said:

"Take me away, Truman, please. I want to be alone—with you — I want to ask you something." The seriousness of her tone struck wonder to his soul. He led the way into the open air to the balcony which he had chosen as his particular trysting spot. As Lida saw the spot and noted that it adjoined several similar ones, she whispered;

"Not there — not there. — I want to be alone with you, where we can talk alone."

Without a word they descended the stairs leading to the track field and started to walk along the cinder path used by the sprinters. The scene was dark except for the lights shining from the brilliantly lighted dance hall which they had left and the electric lights from the street corners

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some distance away, on corners of the quadrangle.

Having noted the seriousness of the girl in her whispered request Truman waited for her to begin speaking and wondered. Lida was at a loss how to begin the subject, though the question seemed to be burning at the end of her tongue. When they had nearly reached the corner of the field in which the track for sprinters started she halted, her arm still resting on that of her escort.

Truman stood facing her as she almost clung pitifully to him. As they stood, suddenly her head drooped and she began to sob softly. Her anguish communicated itself to him.

"Lida, Mine, what's troubling you," he asked, a world of tenderness in his voice.

For reply she sobbed all the harder. He pleaded to be told her trouble. At last her grief seemed spent and she looked up.

"Truman, I love you, and I don't want to hurt you. I trust you and have trusted you with my life. I—I—I—don't know what to do." She burst into a fit of passionate weeping again.

All the love of her heart seemed to go to this man and she wanted him as she had wanted nothing else in the world. Fear to lose him if she asked the question and he became offended rivalled a fear that the words she wished not to hear might be spoken.

"I don't know what to do," she sobbed again.

"You'll not hurt me dear, unless you persist in weeping and not telling me what your trouble is. Nothing can hurt

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me so long as I have your love. Tell me what the matter is."

For answer she reached up and gently caressed his cheeks with both hands, much as a mother soothes the child she loves. At last she mustered the courage she sought.

"Truman, — I am of a Southern family, proud of its ancestry, which runs back for generations in its history to the early colonists and further. You can have no understanding of the pride that runs through us." He attempted to interrupt her. "No," she pleaded, "don't interrupt me. Hear me out then answer me one question I'll ask. .

"My family has been one of slave holders for generations back. Our lands have been tilled by slaves, our homes have been built and cared for by slaves till the Civil war. Since that time descendants of those slaves, former slaves and their children have cared for me and mine. As servants and slaves I have cared for them and they for me. But the attitude has been that of superior and inferior. It has been bred into us as children. We knew and know nothing else.

"It is only just recently that I have come to realize that times are changing — have changed. New conditions have arisen and are arising. Despite the fact that I see these changes, the teachings of generations, the pride of the South grips me. I see former slaves and children of former slaves acquiring property, education and mounting to success yet I cannot go back of traditions.

"It is one of the boasts of my family that we were

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never unkind to our slaves, nor have we been unkind to our tenants. We have been their patrons, even to those who have risen in wealth and education beyond the station of tenant and slave conditions. I was always aloof from their condition. It did not touch me." Here Lida paused for a moment, her hands still resting on Bennet's shoulders, her eyes looking up to his, a yearning in them.

"Only recently have I begun to live and to know life—to know what life means. Just as I was beginning to learn there comes a cloud and — and — I — I — I — I'm almost lost." Tears filled her eyes but she continued bravely. "I'm almost lost. Just as I began to know what love is, they tell me something to spoil it all. They say you have slave blood in you. Tell me, Truman, is that so? Is it true that you have colored blood in you?"

"If I say it's so, what will you do?" he asked.

"I don't know, Truman — I don't know." She clung piteously to the lapel of his coat, awaiting his answer, her soul tortured with anguish. There was a stabbing pain in his heart, so sharp as to cause him to gasp for breath. Bennet wrestled with himself as he had never before, debating whether to speak truthfully and risk the loss of her love for truth or to temporize. At last the dominant character of his nature triumphed and he resolved to speak the truth.

He caught the wrists of Lida's hands as they clung to the lapel of his coat, lifted his head, as his better nature won and, gripping her wrists till they pained her, in the tenseness of his emotion, he told her:

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"Yes, I'm of that race. — There is Negro blood in my veins. — Not slave blood, however — the blood of men is in my veins and of my ancestors and parents. — There's nothing shame-worthy in my blood. None of us are responsible for our birth. Our responsibility is the use we make of life. I have been taught that color counts for nothing. It is what we are. — Therefore I forget color. Besides, of what color am I?"

Lida's head drooped and she sobbed.

"Why couldn't you have told me this before. Why couldn't I have learned it before? Oh, God, what shall I do?"

"It never occurred to me that it would make any difference," he defended. "I loved you and you loved me, of what matter anything else? I gave no thought to ancestry, either yours or mine. When we marry we don't wed ancestry, we wed not tradition, but one another."

"I'm sorry," was all she said. "Take me back, Truman, please."

As they neared the gymnasium, Bennet felt her body shudder and turned to her tenderly. He held her arm tightly to comfort her and was conscious there was no shrinking away as he had half expected from this new turn of events. When they reached the steps and started to mount she turned, with:

"No—no—. Not now—I want to go home—Take me home."

Forgetful of her wraps in the reception room, she turned toward the waiting line of taxicabs. Truman dis-

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patched one of the attendants for her cloak and hat, then when these came, bundled her into the taxicab, started to give directions, when she asked, pleadingly,

“Aren’t you going to take me home?”

He silently stepped into the cab with her and they started for the school. The ways of women are past understanding. They are at once a source of torture and delight. Truman realized this as he pondered over the evening in the small hours of the morning when he had left the girl and was reviewing the scenes through which he had lived that night. When he was handing her out of the cab at the door of Miss Gregory’s school, he was rescued for the moment from the despair into which his heart was buried as Lida, without a word, put her arms about his shoulders and kissed him with all her heart. Without a word she ran lightly up the steps and was gone, before he had time to recover from the surprise of the action.

CHAPTER X

So bitter was his despair at the dashing of all his hopes that he failed to analyze Lida's last act. All the world suddenly seemed to have lost its brightness. Youth, so prone to building castles of air, had been busy with Bennet's ambitions and dreams during the past few months, so busy that he had not seemed to be living on earth but on some planet far away, peopled by but two persons. One short half hour had spoiled all his dreams and filled his heart with bitterness. Even her last kiss failed to console him. He seemed to have lost interest in life itself. Instead of ordering the cabman to return him to the dance, Bennet dismissed the man, without so much as a word, after paying him his fee, then began to walk away from the school.

Forgetting that he was one of the committee and his presence was needed to aid with the entertainment, he continued to walk past the campus and along the quiet shadowy streets of the residence section as in a daze. Without realizing what he was doing he turned back after a time and walked toward the college, bitter thoughts coursing through his mind; bitter at the fate that was his; bitter at the loss of the girl he loved and bitter at conditions which up to this time, he had never faced. He was nurtured and reared in an environment which had never before brought the subject of his race or nationality before him except in a vague indefinite way.

There are some cities and towns in the United States

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where color is not heeded and men and families are judged by their character, success and citizenship, because the invidious propaganda of southern caste hopes had not penetrated. It was in such a community that Bennet had been reared and schooled. Nor had his companions at college given him cause to think seriously of such matters.

His family, because of their stability and success financially had been rated one of the best in the little town of Bremen where he had been schooled, and Bennet's life had been uneventfully one of ordinary youthful progress. His father was a college man, his mother a refined school teacher and though they knew of the potentialities of prejudices, had purposely hesitated to burden their children with any such hampering outlook on life. They took their places in the citizenship of the town, were accepted at the rating on which they placed themselves, that of ordinary citizens, and raised their children in such an atmosphere.

When it came time for Bennet to attend college his school was selected and he matriculated along with two others from his graduating class. He had never tried to conceal anything about his origin. It simply did not occur to him that any explanation would ever be necessary. Little did he dream that the most serious blow of his life was to come to him from this cause.

He was awakened from his dolorous thoughts by the strains of music from the dance orchestra as he had unconsciously turned his footsteps toward the college again.

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At the sounds he remembered that he was one of the committee and began to hurry back to the hall. Suddenly he realized that to return without Lida would call for explanations and decided to continue to his room.

Here he threw himself into a Morris chair where gloomy thoughts engulfed him. Dawn was lighting the eastern sky in streaks, great beams of light flashing intermittently brighter and brighter across the house and tree tops when Bennet's thoughts returned to the present. Taxicab after taxicab rolled and rumbled away from the gymnasium as the last of the dancers departed. At last the chatter of departing couples and their chaperones ended. He sat at his window looking toward the East. As he sat the great ball of fire that gives life to daylight and its hopes climbed the horizon and pierced his eyes. The whole sky was burnished crimson. Bennet noted none of these things, however, his entire body was numbed and his mind in a daze.

Great calamities sometimes affect persons in that manner. They are robbed of their senses, overwhelmed at the immensity of the weight seeming to crush them. Bennet seemed to be affected in this manner. He gave no heed to his surroundings, till a pair of pigeons alighted on the window sill in front of him. The persistent efforts of the male to win the attention of his mate, the struttings, cooings, and other antics compelled attention. Just when the male pranced in front of the mate to begin billing the lady pigeon changed her mind and flew away. The surprise of the bird left behind, the chagrin of defeat and the

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seeming loss of companionship anticipated, recalled Bennet back to the present with such a snap of realization that he almost laughed outright at the bird.

"That's the way of life, old bird," he said. "Disappointment steps in just before success."

At the sound of his voice the remaining bird took wing. Bennet's eyes followed till the pigeon was lost to view. As he looked over the trees his thoughts turned to Lida. The despondency spell was broken, however, and though heart was still heavy, youth is so prone to quick reactions that he began to wonder what she was doing and how she had passed the night. He wondered if she was as miserable as he.

"She can't be," he mused. "What has she to lose?"

Little did he realize that Lida, too, was suffering as had he. Torn between pride and the clamor of her heart she was in a state bordering on insanity. She had not retired but sat, the picture of desolation, by her window weighing all the recent events of her life as they passed in kaleidoscopic sequence before her. She was sitting thus, toying with the ring Bennet had given her when they plighted their lives to each other, when suddenly she felt an arm steal about her waist and the gentle voice of Miss Gregory sounded in her ear.

"Let me help you, dear. I know you are in deep trouble. Tell me. Trouble that is shared soon flees. You need not let a quarrel with Louise spoil your life, or temper."

Intuitively Miss Gregory knew that no girlish quarrel was the cause of this condition in her pupil. She took

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this indirect method of getting the girl to talk. Lida turned slowly toward her, looked at her for several seconds, sighed, and as she did so her lips began to tremble, while her hand sought that of Miss Gregory as if for comfort.

"Miss Gregory," Lida finally spoke. "Were you ever in love?"

"Foolish child. Every woman, at some time in her life has loved, whether successfully or not." Miss Gregory consoled philosophically.

"I mean, did you ever love, hard enough and strong enough to give up everything for the one you loved?"

"Yes, I loved hard enough for all that. But I did not have the courage to give up everything for love. That's why I'm at the head of this school."

"Do you regret giving up your love?" Lida probed.

"Let me tell you, child," Miss Gregory said with a sigh. "No sacrifice can compensate for the loss of love to a woman. And when once a woman loves, never does she forget that love. If I had my life to live over again, if I could recall the lover I once had, nothing would stop me from going to and with him, even to the ends of the earth."

"Nothing, Miss Gregory," Lida asked sadly, pathos in her voice.

"Nothing, dear." Miss Gregory bent close to the girl. "Nothing is worth so much to a human being as love. In fact nothing in life whether of humans or animals is worth more than love. It is love that rules the Universe. Love that rules us. We rule animals best, not by force but by

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the love and kindness we show them. It is love, of a divine kind that sways the world and keeps us from catastrophe after catastrophe, cataclysm after cataclysm. But as for humans there is nothing so beautiful or so satisfying to a woman as the love of a good man—her man.”

“But suppose, there are differences?” Lida persisted.

“There can and should be no differences. There were differences in my case and these differences, mere shadows, have caused me many a night of tears and regrets. Family should not count, nor should religion.—And financial circumstances least of all. So long as tastes are in harmony, desires and ambitions dovetail, nothing should matter.”

“But, Miss Gregory, suppose there’s difference in nationality?”

“The question of love between two persons is a matter of individuality, personality and nationality should not matter any more than religion. God gave us the gift of love, or rather breathed into us the spirit of love, which is himself, before he divided us into nations and races, or religions. I have learned to know this after bitter experiences.”

Lida nestled closer to the elder woman as if the words comforted. She still had some questions to ask for she sighed pathetically. Miss Gregory drew the girl closer to her as if to encourage her to talk. Before Lida could frame another question, however, Miss Gregory continued ruminatively:

“The trouble with most of us is we love not truly.”

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"Oh, Miss Gregory, how can you say that?" Lida asked.

"It is true," was the defense. "We love form, social position, public approbation, grandeur, wealth, and many things when we men and women should love character, gentility, good breeding, soul, ideals, moral courage, beauty of spirit in persons. I neglected to see these and have been left a lonely aging woman."

"But you have your school and the love of your girls. You are dear to them and they must be to you," Lida offered.

"True, but what love can compensate a woman for the love of a strong good man and children? No, my dear, if you truly love a man and he loves you, follow your love and your heart."

"But, Miss Gregory, my case is so different. You don't understand. I—I—can't tell you." Lida burst into a fit of weeping again.

Miss Gregory stroked the head that now lay in her lap. As she stroked the girl's head she soothed her with:

"You poor child. Don't worry, it will all come out right." Suddenly Lida sat up, looked into the eyes of the elder woman then asked:

"Miss Gregory, could you,—would you marry a man of the colored race—a man of slave race, if you were of a family that had owned slaves?"

Miss Gregory paled and almost swooned. "Oh, God," she said, "is that the trouble? You poor child, no wonder you worry. What a calamity! What an awful calamity." she began to weep herself. Lida looked on in wonder-

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ment not knowing what to think. Miss Gregory, however, through her tears was picturing the calamity to her school, and the scandal news of such an affair would create among her pupils; she saw her school wrecked since parents would no longer send their children to her place as a select school for finishing. She saw her livelihood vanishing, and panic seized her. Tears dried and horror gripped her heart.

"You don't mean that, dear girl." She finally managed to say. "What will your father say? What will everybody say. Where did you meet him? Oh, forget him, forget him, forget him. Such a thing is impossible! Such a thing would only mean trouble. Don't think of it. Who is he? Tell me."

"I'm afraid it's too late now, Miss Gregory. I love him," Lida said simply.

"Who is he? Where did you meet him? How did it happen?" A thousand questions rushed in panicky fashion through the elder woman's mind.

Lida looked at her adviser in amazement. "Why, you just said nationality shouldn't count. What did you mean?"

"Not that,—not that, not that," Miss Gregory wailed. "I never dreamed of that. You will ruin us all, ruin me, ruin my school—Oh, God, what shall I do?"

"Then you didn't mean what you were just saying?—You were just trying to comfort me. All your fine words were empty?—And I thought I had a friend," she ended pathetically.

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The elder woman was silent till the silence was becoming painful to the two. Lida essayed to speak again. Miss Gregory, her head still bowed, the chin cupped in a hand, her elbow on the arm of the Morris chair, was still silent. The words she had spoken to the girl were still repeating themselves in her mind. Did nothing matter? She was asking herself. As she debated she recalled her own broken romance of early life, how this had spoiled her life and caused her heart to wither and dry till she opened this school. Her romance had been broken because of proud parents and the question of wealth but it had been broken just the same. Now after sacrificing love for wealth, her family had lost their wealth, her father and mother had died, the former of grief over financial losses and she had been left cheated out of both wealth and love. Lida had risen and was standing at the window of her room looking onto the street. As Miss Gregory thought the lines deepened in her face till it became drawn and somewhat hard and pale. The silence was tense. Finally she sighed deeply. Lida turned and the teacher beckoned the girl to her.

"Lida," she said, "I am here as teacher, counsellor and guide to my girls. What I said a little while ago I meant. Nothing in life should outweigh love, if we are truly to be happy. The question of whether we are to sacrifice love for other things is a matter for each to decide. I know human nature enough to say that women look on love and marriage differently than do men. If a woman loves a man she cares not who he is or what he is. If she decides

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that a man can make her happy and keep her happy, she cares not who or what he is. Most of us, though, are color cowards and public opinion cowards. We fear what the other fellow will say; what the other girl will say.

“For a girl to marry a colored man requires heroic courage, here in America. There are many such marriages, it is true, but none between a girl of your standing and rearing and one of that race. I don’t think the man ought to ask the girl to make such a sacrifice.—”

“Oh, he hasn’t asked me,” Lida hastened to defend. Miss Gregory waved her hand impatiently at the interruption.

“For a girl of your standing to take such a step means the sacrifice of home, family, friends, wealth; the causing of bitterness, heartaches on the part of your family and much doubt as to the success of the experiment. You will be cut off entirely from your friends and associates who will see only that you have thrown your life away; you will be without companions except such as he, from his choosing may bring to you and such an act can mean only trouble and grief, for you. I have known some happy marriages of the kind, and see no reason why such unions should not be happy except that conditions in America are not ripe for such. The world is too full of prejudice. In some other country it might be successful. It has been successful—It would be successful. The question is, in your case, is he worth the worry and sacrifice to be entailed?

“I think not. I would advise, before your romance goes

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too far, that you forget it. When I spoke of forgetting, it was before I was thinking of what the story of such an alliance would mean for me and my school. I am getting to be an old woman now, and this has been my dependence. Therefore, you will understand and forgive me, for the outburst, selfish as it was. For your own sake, Lida, child—for your own sake I would advise you to forget this romance. It is your first, and a girlish romance. It will be easy to forget. There will come a greater love in your life some day and you will look back on this romance as a girlish dream and be glad you did not take the step you contemplate.”

“Has that been your experience, Miss Gregory?” Lida asked.

“Oh, no. But my case was different. I was in love with a white man.”

“You loved, though, didn’t you?” Lida persisted.

“Yes.”

“You still love, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“And that is true love, isn’t it? You didn’t care what the man was, you just loved him?” Miss Gregory bowed her head in assent. “Well, I have loved and do love. I did not ask what manner of man it was I loved. I know him to be a man and I love him. It is too late now to talk forgetting. I’ll never forget him. How can I forget what my heart wants as it has wanted nothing else in my life. Besides he saved my life and I owe it to him. I would go to the ends of the earth with him. What if he

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has colored blood in him, he also has white blood, and except that, to me he stands out above all the men I have known. He is no different from any other man."

Miss Gregory now saw that it would be useless to argue further with Lida but decided she would do what she could to thwart any further intercourse with Lida and her lover, even though as yet she had not learned the name of the young man. She reasoned that the name would be easy to secure when once her plans were made, since she could get the information from some of the other girls in the school. When she saw Lida becoming excited over the subject she dismissed it with:

"Well, my dear, we'll talk things over again later. You'll be excused from classes today, now get some sleep and I'll send a nurse to look after you, then perhaps, to-night I'll come and talk it all over with you again." With that she kissed the girl and was gone.

CHAPTER XI

As she passed from the room the weight of the world seemed on her shoulders and her face bore lines of tragedy. She knew that to oppose her will to the will of a young girl in love was but to aggravate and drive the girl more quickly into the arms of her lover. Such is the perverseness of young people; has been and always will be. She decided that such a course would not do. Miss Gregory decided that the best thing to do was to find out who the young man was, try to prevail upon him to give up the girl and that failing, to seek some other means of breaking up the match. That there should be no match she was determined. She would not allow her protegee to throw her life away. She had just reached her room and fallen weakly into her study chair by the little table at which she did most of her work when she had a sudden inspiration. On the instant she touched the bell near the base of the study lamp. A maid responded.

"Ask Miss Comstock to come to me immediately, if possible, please."

The maid departed and in a few minutes Louise Comstock stood wonderingly before the head of the school.

"Sit down, please, Miss Comstock. I wish to talk with you. How's your headache? Better, child?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss Gregory, thank you." Miss Comstock replied.

"What made you ill, dear? You didn't attend the re-

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ception at the college the other night. That's unusual for you. What was the trouble?"

Miss Gregory was watching the expression on the girl's face keenly. She noted immediately upon asking the question, the spasm of pain that swept over the countenance, saw the eyelids flutter and droop and the lips twitch nervously. She also thought she detected a tear. Immediately she surmised the trouble and asked:

"Had a spat with your escort? she asked shrewdly. "Too bad," she continued kindly and philosophically. "I hope the differences are all mended or soon will be."

When Louise remained silent, Miss Gregory continued. "I did not ask you here to hurt you. I want to know something about a young man. What sort of a man is Truman Bennet? The young man who rescued you and Miss Lauriston?"

At mention of the name the girl looked up with a gasp of surprise. She gazed at the elder woman intently as if to read the reason of the question. Miss Gregory returned the look and waited. For a moment Louise wondered whether to speak truly or not. Finally she seemed to detect a flicker of a friendly smile about Miss Gregory's lips that invited confidence. Without a word she arose, stepped over to the chair at which the teacher sat, rested on the arm with her own arm about the shoulders of the elder woman, then bent over and tenderly kissed Miss Gregory's forehead. With that she burst out, "Oh, Miss Gregory, how did you know? How did you know?" Her tone was joyful, believing that the older woman, whose

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duty it was to know all the secrets of her girls in some way, divined the fact that Louise was in love with Truman Bennet.

Miss Gregory, thinking of Lida, preferred to preserve silence, and wait.

With a sigh of contentment and consolation at the thought that she had a friend in whom she could confide, Louise spoke tenderly and softly. There is no solace for a troubled soul so welcomed as the ear of sympathetic friend. It was the first time Louise had had opportunity for unburdening her heart to anyone and she was glad of the chance. With a voice softened almost to a whisper by the emotion which moved her, she said:

"Truman Bennet, Miss Gregory, is—is—," the girl hesitated, seeking words for describing him, while Miss Gregory waited. Suddenly she burst out with, "Oh, Miss Gregory, I can't describe him. He's my ideal."

Miss Gregory turned to look at the girl, saw the rapt tenderness of her face, guessed at the emotions which moved her and made a mental notation, then asked:

"What does he look like?"

"He's tall, swarthy, like a Spaniard or a Moor, with brown eyes."

"Where does he come from? Who are his parents?"

"He's in the graduating class at college—He's a senior. From one of the little towns of the State. I don't know his family, except that they say they are—" Louise hesitated as she remembered the nationality of Bennet. "He's

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a perfect man and a gentleman, however," she hastily added as if in defense.

From the emotion detected in the girl at the beginning of the conversation, Miss Gregory had expected a rapturous description of the young man. When she found the girl loathed to speak of Bennet, and then only in terms of quiet praise and defense, she realized that Louise, too, entertained a deep emotion for Bennet. With this realization she asked:

"Have you seen him often?"

"Yes, when at games and at other times the boys give. He's very popular. I've never been in his company much. He's the young man who saved me during the strike riot last fall."

"Oh, I see." She turned to the girl with: "Would you marry him?"

The two looked straight into each other's souls at the question, Louise hesitated a moment, then dropped her head as she answered.

"Yes, Miss Gregory. I would if he asked me. But he won't—he won't."

Miss Gregory arose, stroked the girl's head then walked to her window and gazed to the street. "Maybe he will," she said — "Maybe he will. That is all dear."

Louise, hesitated, still seated on the arm of the chair from which Miss Gregory had risen. She wanted to speak her heart but maidenly emotions prevented. Slowly she left the room, half cheered, half disheartened, and full of wonder.

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For some minutes after Louise had departed Miss Gregory continued to gaze from the window down the street far into the past to where the romance of her own life had begun and ended. Despite the promptings of what she considered her duty, the picture of a youth and girl crossing a meadow in a rich coloring of spring sunset, smiling happily at each other and planning the many things they would do, now that they had pledged their lives and had promised to love each other. She was the girl and the youth a young man, son of humble parents whose few-acre farm adjoined the country estate of her parents. The picture of this romance conjured again from the past pleaded with her in the case of Lida and Bennet. Stern reality of the present, the duty she felt to her school, to herself and to the father who had entrusted the girl to her care and training, all argued against romance. The argument was too strong and romance lost. With tears in her eyes, reminders of her own bitterness, she turned away from the window determined upon a course of action. She would interview Bennet and convince him of the futility of pursuing the course he was on.

While summoning a messenger she penned a polite note asking "Would Mr. Truman Bennet be kind enough to call at the office of Miss Gregory, of Miss Gregory's finishing school at 4.30 o'clock or as soon thereafter as was convenient."

With the note dispatched she sat at her desk to await an answer. With a feeling that she was trespassing guiltily where she had no right, she waited, wondering whether

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the note would bring the young man or whether her effort would fail. The trepidation of her heart increased as the minutes passed and the messenger failed to return, with an answer. The college and school were so near each other that they were almost like a New England co-educational institution. In fact some of the instructors from the college eked out their salary by instructing some of the classes at the finishing school. As she waited, Miss Gregory began to grow nervous and, unable to remain sitting no longer, began to pace the room. She was just on the point of giving up hope of the young man's coming when the messenger returned with word that Bennet would be pleased to obey the summons.

Bitter thoughts so traced themselves across the brain of Truman Bennet, following the night of the Promenade that thoughts, locking his room and barring all companions who he was unable to study. He gave himself up to his gloomy thought to talk with him about the success of the affair. When at last they became alarmed and insisted in seeing him, he announced that he was ill and wished to remain undisturbed. After his classmates and friends had experienced some of his irritation they became fully convinced that he was truly ill. They ministered to him as best they could with his consent so far as he would give it, then departed. Left to himself Truman became feverish from worry. He turned his room into a miniature drug store in his efforts to relieve himself of the headache from which he suffered. Try as he would, however, no relief came since he could not shake off his misery.

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When the messenger reached his room with the note from Miss Gregory, he seemed on the verge of insanity from his suffering. At the first knocking at his door he resolved not to answer. When the knocking was repeated, determinedly, however, he shouted, petulantly, "Go away. Get away from that door and don't bother me." He was just about to hurl a handy caraffe of water against the door to emphasize his desire to be left alone, when the voice of the messenger called:

"Mr. Bennet—Mr. Bennet—I've got a note for you."

"Who is it?" Bennet asked.

"Me," came back ungrammatically. "It's me, the messenger boy."

"What messenger boy. I don't want any messenger boy."

"I've got a note from Miss Gregory's school for Mr. Bennet. Is that you?"

At mention of Miss Gregory's school, Bennet leaped from the couch on which he had been reclining. He leaped so quickly as to jump out of the bedroom slippers in which his feet were encased. He was across the room in an instant with the door opened. In his pajamas and dressing robe, with his hair dishevelled, and a white bandage about his head he presented such a ghostly wild appearance that the boy was on the point of bolting. Bennet grabbed the missive from the outstretched hand, tore the envelope open and read the formal scented note Miss Gregory had sent him. In puzzlement over the signature he lifted his hand to his forehead and unconsciously

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pushed the bandage from his forehead, pressing his hand there instead.

For a few seconds he failed to comprehend the note. Visions of Lida came to him; fear that she was ill, or that something had happened to her almost had him frantic. Suddenly he recalled their parting and realized that this could not be so when she had not the feeling for him that he had for her. The boy waited patiently. Finally he said:

"There's an answer. She said I was to wait for it."

"Oh," gasped Bennet. "Yes,—yes—Oh, there's an answer. — Tell her I'll be there. Tell her I'll — I'll — be there."

With that he closed the door and began to prepare for the visit. Youth quickly reacts against emotions and by the time Bennet had finished a cold shower with a brisk rubdown, his mood of gloom had almost left him and he found his headache gone. He was once more looking sanely at life and wondering what could be the meaning of the invitation to call. His toilet was deliberate and careful as was always his way. When he left his room, his mates across the hall were so surprised at his immaculateness of dress and his quick recovery from tormenting illness that they believed he had suddenly gone insane and watched him intently. Fear that, in his madness he planned to harm himself, several of them followed down the stairs and halfway across the campus, at a discreet distance, however.

When he turned into Prospect Street and started in the

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direction of Miss Gregory's school, they decided he was on his way to call on Lida and, with the wisdom of college youth, concluded that Bennet's illness was due to a love quarrel and that he was on the way to a peace conference. For a few moments longer, after they had paused in their pursuit, they gazed steadily at Bennet, watched his steady, firm, though hurried stride, clapped each other on the back as they chuckled, hooked feet, with hands resting on shoulders, then did a one-foot dance.

CHAPTER XII

Bennet was not long in reaching the school and was ushered into the office. This was a large, high-ceiled room with but little furniture save a rug in the center on which was a wide flat-topped desk of heavy oak, an office swivel chair behind it and a straight backed chair in front and facing the office chair. There were one or two other chairs at the sides. On the walls were reproductions of ruins of the Parthenon at Rome, a front view of the school from which several students looked, standing on the steps, a landscape, and a trophy of some hunting expedition. He stood hat in hand, hesitating before seating himself, when from an inner room opposite the entrance door, Miss Gregory appeared, extending a hand and smiling as she greeted him. Her nerves had been in such a condition as she waited that she was still aflutter and despite her efforts at self control she could feel her face alternately flush and pale.

"Mr. Bennet, I'm glad you came. I see you got my note." Before he could frame a reply she turned, took her seat and beckoned Bennet to the chair opposite the desk, with: "Won't you be seated, please."

As he turned to the seat indicated, Miss Gregory became self possessed enough to study Bennet. She noted the frank open countenance; the confident poise, the clear brown eyes, the firm chin, well chiseled lips, that indicated kindness, the brown wavy hair falling back from the high forehead and realized that he was just the sort of

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young man who would catch a girl's fancy. She could see, however, that he was unconscious of his attractiveness and power; that he was unassuming and modest by his bearing. She almost decided not to go through with what she planned. The lines of her face softened for an instant and her grey eyes became pitying. This feeling of pity recalled her to her task, however, and after hesitating, while Bennet waited, she sighed then began. The grey eyes became cold.

"Mr. Bennet," she said. "I have a very unpleasant duty to perform." She paused as if hoping Bennet would say something. He remained quiet, however. "You know, my school is very select. We cater to the most particular families. We take pride in the care we take of our students, the cultural training we give them and the standing of the families patronizing us.

"You must realize how careful we have to be that our girls are preserved from contact with others than those of the social set to which they are accustomed. There are those among my pupils whose ancestry dates back to families of the nobility of England; others who spring from Colonial stock and others along whose family tree may be traced generation after generation of distinguished citizens.

"I mention these things," she continued, when, after a pause, Bennet still chose to remain silent and to hear her out, "to show how utterly out of place and unsuccessful associations and marriages along the lines I have indicated would be.

"Take yourself, for instance. Popular and well bred

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though you are. For I have learned that you are one of the most popular young men at college, you could not hope to contract a marriage with one of my girls, however friendly you might become with one of them."

"Was it for this," Bennet asked, calmly, "that you asked me here?"

Miss Gregory's face turned pink as she bowed her head in acknowledgment. As he spoke, Bennet's mind flashed to a paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which he had learned at school. "All men are endowed with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

At her acquiescence, Bennet sat back in his chair as he said:

"Miss Gregory, from a study of the Mayflower band's history, the history of other colonists, and early settlers, it would seem that there is much in the life of these that might be left buried in the coffins of the past. There are things in their lives of which present day descendants don't care to boast. To rattle the dry bones of ancestry may not be the wisest act for some of us. So far as heritage is concerned, I can boast of as much as they. Perhaps more. I have as good breeding behind me as the best, my family may not be as wealthy but it certainly has as good training as any in America. I have been as carefully and as well reared. So I don't see how the things you mention concern me."

"Yes, my dear boy, but you don't understand."

"I understand enough to know that a lady has invited

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me here to insult me. If that is good breeding, please excuse me." With that he started to rise. Miss Gregory began to fear her mission would fail.

"Oh, be patient," she exclaimed. "Hear me. You don't understand.

"You are different, don't you know. All you say might be true of any other race and nationality but yours."

"Race? Nationality? Of what race and nationality am I?"

"You are colored, are you not?"

"What do you say?"

"I? — I can't say. I ask you." She parried.

"I am of mixed blood. There is a strain of colored blood in me. But I am much honored in the blood. There is a strain of white blood in me, and I am much honored in the blood, for both bloods are one. To have the blood of a former slave in one's veins is not of itself a disgrace. Many of our early settlers were slaves before coming here or the descendants of slaves. They are none the less men for that. Therefore I say it is of no matter so long as I prove a man whether there be one strain or many strains of blood coursing through my veins. It ill becomes a woman and a lady, who prides herself in ancestry and good breeding to make an invited guest the butt of insults. Besides, what does this interview mean? Why was I asked here?"

In a last final effort, Miss Gregory took in a deep breath, leaned across the desk and said: "You have assumed,—dared to fall in love with one of my girls. She

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in her innocence has taken a fancy to you. I asked you here to show you the folly of such an affair; to appeal to your judgment and reasoning, your regard for the girl; your gallantry, to break away from any such affair."

"Go back on my word, forsake my pledge and thereby prove myself a cad?" Bennet exclaimed, thinking of Lida. "You ask what will never be. I could never consider myself a man or square myself with my idea of manliness by such an act. Besides, what would become of the girl?"

"Oh, I'll look out for her. If you pass out of her life she will soon forget you. Her's is only a girlish infatuation. Besides, you know she could never marry you even though you had all the wealth and breeding in the world. Your race is against you. The girl doesn't love you. She doesn't know what love is."

At these words, and remembering the talk on the cinder path the night of the Promenade, Bennet began to feel that perhaps the words of Miss Gregory were true. His heart sank. He arose to end the interview. Miss Gregory believing she had scored, stood also and as a bit of parting advice, said:

"Miss Lauriston could never love you and is only carried away for the moment with the newness of her life. Forget her, my boy. Find some other girl and wed in your own race and be happy."

Bennet turned his eyes blazing with anger he could no longer restrain. He towered like a righteous young god before Miss Gregory who quailed.

"Miss Gregory, what you have said may be true. I

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don't believe it. Miss Lauriston is not a girl to love lightly; nor is she a girl to pledge her word and go back on it. Until she tells me of her own volition that she did not mean what she said I'll take her word for it. And whether she does or not, my love is hers. It will always be hers and all the powers of hell cannot prevent me from loving her."

With that he stalked from the room. Miss Gregory, feeling that her mission had failed, sank back into her chair, her head on her arm on the desk. Bennet, despite his passion was more than half convinced that Miss Gregory was right in saying that Lida did not love him, and was passing down the hallway to the door, in a pall of gloom when suddenly he heard the swish of a dress and felt someone grasp his hand, pressing into it a bit of paper, then closing it tightly again. He turned at the touch of the hand but the act was so quick that whoever it was had disappeared in a room at hand before he could catch more than a glimpse of her. He was still thoroughly angry when he reached the sidewalk.

He almost forgot the little slip of paper which he clutched. Suddenly he paused, opened the paper and read: "I love you, with all my heart. I love you. No matter what happens. I love you and always will.

Lida."

The effect was instantaneous. He lifted his head and laughed with joy. To Miss Gregory, who was watching his departure, the laughter was puzzling and mysterious. She felt that she had argued in vain and was beaten.

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There was another looking from a window, from behind heavy draperies. To this window Bennet turned, smiled and lifted his hat. He trod on air.

Lida, into whose soul had come the conviction that love was greater than any other feeling, after the fashion of her kind who when touched by the spirit of love, has awakened in them the feeling of mothering, was won over to the protection of her lover and forced to rally to his defense by the attitude of Miss Gregory, and her so positive opposition. Thus instead of discouraging the girl, Miss Gregory raised a wall of defense in Bennet's behalf.

As Lida went to her room she was more and more intense in her defense. Instead of feeling discouraged, she was more and more in love and resented, as she reviewed the conversation, the interference of her teacher. It was while debating the whole situation over in her mind as she stood at her window that she saw Bennet approaching the school. Her heart gave a throb of happiness at his sight that was like a sharp pain in its intensity. She stood with her hands clasped over her heart, fearing that he was merely passing the building. For a moment she felt resentful that he could seem so happy when she was so miserable over the situation and had been so wretched. She had believed that he too was suffering as she had, and the consciousness of companion suffering had drawn her closer to him.

She watched him, from behind the draperies till he mounted the steps when she turned, expectantly, waiting to be summoned to the reception room. When no sum-

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mons came, curiosity to know what had brought him to the school and where he had gone prompted her to go to the head of the stairs. She was just in time to see him being ushered into the office of Miss Gregory. At first she was surprised but suddenly with the wise intuition which her experiences were giving her she reasoned that Miss Gregory must have summoned the young man with the determination to break off their affair.

Indignation swelled her soul at the thought and she also feared that Miss Gregory, in her determination, would offer insult to Bennet. She was too well bred to do eavesdropping, though the temptation was strong. For a moment or so she was in a quandary what to do, then her mind hit upon the plan of waiting till the interview was over and assuring Bennet of her regard for him despite what had been disclosed. It was due to this that Truman found himself in possession of the note that so cheered him.

Nothing so fills a man with daring as the knowledge that love given is received and returned. It was this that made cave men battle; it was for this that kingdoms have been overturned; it was for this that histories have been changed and remade; and it is but as God intended. When we are filled with that divine spark, we humans, no obstacle is too great to be overcome. Cowards become heroes and criminals become saints.

With the words of the note burning themselves into Bennet's heart and brain he trod air and walked with the step of a Hercules capable of accomplishing any set num-

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ber of tasks. He was still in this mood when he reached his room. In addition to the great love which possessed him there was a feeling of tender gratitude toward the girl who gave such evidence of being the real character he had pictured her.

Real love uplifts and deifies, and the love of these two was real. In his ecstasy, Truman sat at his desk and poured out his soul to Lida in a letter which, after recounting all his experiences, ended with the words:

"I want to do nothing that will bring harm to you. I will do nothing that will bring harm to you. And yet I want you with all the yearning of a true man's heart. I shall always want you in that way. Life would have been; life will be dark as the nights at sea without the beacon of your love. I shall reverence you the more for the circumstances of your love, and matters not what the future brings to us, no bitterness of experience will be able to blot out of mind the happy fact that I am loved by and do love the noblest woman that has lived."

When this letter was mailed, Bennet turned to reveries and dreams of future happiness, sitting at his desk and looking into the future with all the optimism of youth, building air castles and planning how to shape his life to be worthy of the love he had won, all his anguish gone.

Lida, also, after he had departed from the school, busied herself with plans for the future. Though in her woman's way and with her woman's instincts, she saw into the future with much more clearness than did Bennet. As she studied the future, while her heart was happy, she realized

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that there was much trouble in store for her.

"Yet," she decided, "his love is worth it all. We grow up to meet, make and face our own circumstances. I have my life to live and must live it. I'd rather live it with love than without."

With that conclusion, after sitting far into the night she prepared for bed and retired, a happy smile on her face, the reflection of happiness of heart.

Miss Gregory also was sitting up until late in the evening pondering over the events of the past few days and particularly the interview she had with Bennet. She felt she had made an impression on the young man as she talked with him and also that she had won him over so that it would be easy to break off any associations. When Bennet, however, tossed his head back and laughed, the act she had witnessed as he departed, she became puzzled and felt less sure of herself and the success of her plan. She was not to be outwitted, however, in her determination. Before she retired she had decided on her next course. She would appeal to the faculty of the college to impress upon Bennet the futility of his plan, the sad consequences and they would be able to bring pressure to bear that would have a sobering effect on the young man.

"I'll prevent him from graduating, if he persists," she determined as she shook her head to emphasize the determination. "I'll let him know a thing or two. That child must be saved. That's all there is to it. She must be saved. I'll see the President tomorrow."

With that action settled in her mind she retired.

CHAPTER XIII

With Miss Gregory to make a decision was to act. It was but living up to this characteristic the following morning when, after having gotten her classes well started she set off for the college administration building for the purpose of laying the facts before the president and enlisting his aid. Coming to the large, imposing, ivy covered structure which, with its atmosphere of quiet, gave the impression of studiousness and culture, she stepped into the reception room, sent her card to the President and was shortly ushered in.

The President, a short, quickly nervous acting man, whose rotundity of body gave one the impression of a city alderman, accustomed to and enjoying the good things of life, smiled and bounced to his feet as Miss Gregory came into the room, his massive head with its heavy thatch of just-turning grey hair nodded vigorously at the same time that he smiled broadly. All he needed was the apron and a butcher knife to have seemed the inn-keeper in some old world village.

These two had had many meetings before for the purpose of adjudicating differences and matters relating to the students of one school or the other. It was in anticipation of some such trouble that Dr. Dennig greeted Miss Gregory on this morning. Despite the fact that they had met on many other occasions there never was an occasion for such a meeting but that the genial President had tried to grasp the hand of the head of the Girls' school in a way

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to give the impression of affection for her. It was always a flabby sort of grip that Miss Gregory, when she spoke of the incident at all with her intimates, had described as "clammy."

As he stood, this morning, he reached for the hand again, with:

"Why, good morning, Miss Gregory! How do you do?"

Miss Gregory failed to notice the extended hand or to recognize the greeting except with a bow.

"To what am I indebted for this so early a visit on such a spring morning? I hope it is an errand of love—a—a—a personal errand, I mean." Here he tried again to reach the hand of the woman. Miss Gregory tightened her lips and sat in the chair at the side of the desk. When she still remained silent though smiling to conceal her dislike of the man and his mannerisms, Dr. Dennig continued:

"I suppose some of my boys have been flirting again. Or rather that your girls have been tempting my boys and you come to blame them for being led on. You know, I can't blame my boys, when I'm so hard hit myself by the —," here he bowed again as best he could over the front elevation of himself, "director of the school. I—"

Before he could continue, Miss Gregory interrupted with:

"Dr. Dennig, don't be a fool all your life. Remember you're head of this institution and conduct yourself accordingly. I have come to complain of one of your boys and I want your help. I want the help of the entire faculty."

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"Ah, is it as serious as that? That you deem it a faculty matter?"

"You'll see how serious it is," she snapped.

"I'm all attention then, proceed," he directed.

"I have a southern young woman in my school, who comes from a proud, very proud and distinguished family. She and one of your students have fallen desperately in love."

"I don't see that that is such a serious matter. Young men and young women have fallen in love before, even as you and I,—I beg pardon, even as I with you. That's a characteristic of youth, you know. So long as they observe the laws of society, what matters to us? They've done so in other years here and I presume this will not be an off year in the matter of announced engagements when graduations take place. Why worry?"

"But, you don't understand. This engagement is folly—perfect folly, besides it will wreck a young girl's life and will wreck my school."

"My dear Miss Gregory, have you not learned yet that youth will brook no interference when it comes to its love affairs. At least not in these modern days. In our day—"

"I beg pardon," she interrupted.

"In my day," Dr. Dennig corrected hastily, "parents and guardians had much to say concerning the companions of youth and choices for mates but times have changed. We are in a new day. Young people have more freedom. They take more freedom—demand more and when we old fogies attempt to interfere its like trying to harness an un-

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broken Texas pony. Now my advice is to let this matter severely alone."

"But, you don't understand. You don't understand."

"But I do understand. I understand you fear that this match if consummated will wreck your school. Fie on that. You fear needlessly. No love affair ever broke up a school."

"This one will—," Miss Gregory persisted "and if you don't act, it will break yours up also."

"Never." Dr. Dennig shook his head pompously.

"Well, hear me out anyway then decide. This girl, I say, is a southerner, with spirit of the south in her being. She has fallen in love with a man of colored blood—fallen in love with Bennet—Truman Bennet."

Dr. Dennig sat back in his chair without a word as if stunned and gazed from the window across the campus arched over by stately elms of generations growth. Thus he sat for fully five minutes. Miss Gregory waited silently, the fingers of his hands touching as in the attitude of prayer. At the end of his meditations he turned to Miss Gregory, with:

"What would you have me do?" he finally asked. "Bennet is an estimable fellow, well liked, and would never be taken for one with colored blood in him. He is manly, too. I've watched him through his four years. Besides he finishes next month—graduates. We can't command him to cease loving the girl, if she cares for him. We can't expel him for that. It seems as if you must work on the

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girl if you desire to break the match. That's your play, Miss Gregory."

Miss Gregory stamped her foot as she said:

"Call a faculty meeting and have him before it. Demand that he cease his attentions or suffer the penalty of not receiving his degree."

"But he's earned his degree," Dr. Dennig insisted.

"The faculty awards degrees. The faculty can withhold them for whatever purpose they see fit. It is within your right. Put it to a vote and you will see the faculty will bear me out," Miss Gregory still argued.

There was another long pause while Dr. Dennig studied the distant view across the campus. Finally he said, with a deep intake of breath through his teeth:

"I'll call the faculty meeting, if you'll come before them, state your case, make your own plea and then let them vote."

"I'll come — surely — yes," was the positive answer.

"But, I'll make this stipulation," Dr. Dennig persisted. "Bennet shall have his chance also."

"Is that necessary?" returned Miss Gregory with a feeling of misgiving.

"It is. He has committed no crime—and I don't believe the faculty will sustain you. — However, we'll see. I'm neutral," added Dr. Dennig raising his hands to emphasize the words.

"I'll vouch for the faculty.—Thank you, Dr. Dennig," Miss Gregory said with a positiveness she did not feel.

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"I'll notify you of the meeting," said Dr. Dennig as the two parted at the door.

Miss Gregory was determined to see that she had her way and set about to canvass the members of the faculty with whom she was friendly, in effort to enlist them on her side. Those she won over, she pledged to her support without telling them what she wanted. "Just vote with me and for me at the meeting when the subject comes up," was what she asked them.

All unmindful of the storm brewing about their heads, conscious only of the fact that their love was mutual and growing stronger, Bennet and Lida contrived to meet for a few moments each day and filled up the remaining time of their existence writing to and thinking of each other. They lived only in the moment and their love, as is the way of youth. They had decided, each to return to their respective homes after school ended, inform their parents, then if objections arose to meet at some to be appointed place there to marry and start their wedded life. Bennet had already secured a commission to travel for a large business firm and it was planned to combine business with their honeymoon abroad.

The day of the faculty meeting, due to the activity and energy of Miss Gregory, found the session permeated with subdued curiosity and an air of mysterious tensity. Neighboring members viewed each other with wonderment, none knowing just what to expect. Dr. Dennig was as mystifying as possible, for instead of the usual smiling suavity of greeting, and the joking banter with which he was accus-

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tomed to greet them as they joined him he was serious, sedate and preoccupied.

The professors gathered in the meeting room above the President's office, as was their usage, each taking his accustomed place, with Dean Sandager, aged and patriarchal, at the side of the President and the secretary of the faculty on the other. On either side down the long glass topped table extending the length of the room, remaining members of the faculty took their seats. The Dean of the Divinity School, Dr. Morris, another patriarch of the faculty sat at the end opposite the President.

As the President was about to call the meeting to order he gave the office messenger a note with instructions to deliver it immediately. With this he entered the faculty room and sat at his place. The air was full of expectancy. Every member of the faculty who had been bidden was present. All eyes focussed on Dr. Dennig. After a few moments the latter arose and said:

"Gentlemen, this is no meeting of the faculty in the regular sense of the word. I have called you here at the suggestion of another on a matter that may or may not concern the faculty, according to your viewpoint. This college seeks and has sought to produce men, real men, who, when they left our influence, would have had their ideas and morals so shaped as to stand with real men and lead in life. I have been asked to let you decide a question that I personally believe does not concern us. It has been argued that it is a question for the public good and on the question of that point alone I shall submit it to you."

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Here Dr. Dennig stated the proposition that had been put to him by Miss Gregory, detailing the story. When he concluded he said:

"In order that you may judge and decide for yourselves I have asked both Miss Gregory and the other principal concerned to appear before you. I shall first call Miss Gregory."

With that he touched a bell at his elbow and Miss Gregory entered.

"Miss Gregory," Dr. Dennig continued, "I have laid the matter before the faculty and will allow you to present your case."

Miss Gregory then stepped to the table and after facing the gathering for a second, said:

"Gentlemen, I'll be brief and to the point. I am sorry to do this but feel it is my duty and that you will feel it your duty in the interest of all concerned to concur in what I shall ask you.

"Miss Gregory's school and this college have been neighbors, and I might say friendly neighbors for years. The pupils at my school and yours have formed many happy friendships, most of which have been fortunate. I have rejoiced in the close associations of my school and yours; of my students and yours. The reputation of my school has been built on its exclusiveness, the care exercised over the pupils, the training given them and the culture they absorb. Your college has been built on the success of your teaching and the principles you teach and the type of men you turn out. All that is admitted.

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"There has arisen a rather unfortunate circumstance which we all owe it to ourselves to amend at no matter what sacrifice. I promise you that I shall exercise more care in the future. One of my pupils whose family and traditions bear me out in my action of opposition has unfortunately taken a fancy to one of your students whom she cannot marry and should not be allowed to marry. I don't want drastic action unless all other efforts fail. I have tried to dissuade the girl and have seemingly failed. I have tried to dissuade the young man in question and have failed. I appeal to you now, for aid. I would ask you gentlemen to summon the young man, impress upon him the enormity of the differences in his circumstances and hers, and assure him that should he persist he will not be allowed to graduate."

"Who is this young man?" Dean Sandager asked. The same question was on the tongue of several others.

"Truman Bennet."

"Bennet — Bennet, Bennet — Why he's all right," came from several sections of the room at the same time as professors recalled their contact with Bennet and his bearing in college. Miss Gregory's face flushed for a minute at the seeming hopelessness of her task.

"Do you mean to say," she asked, leaning slightly over the table in her intensity, "that you don't know who and what he is, after four years spent with him? Don't you know that he is colored; that he has Negro blood in his veins? He can't be allowed to form an alliance with a southern girl of breeding and refinement such as Lida

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Lauriston. You cannot allow it! You must not allow it! What will become of my school if such a thing happens?" Her voice was now raised almost to a shrill in her excitement. "This thing must not be."

"Perish the thought!" "Never, never!" "The fool! That's what comes of too much education!" "We'd lynch him in the south for such a thought even!" This last from one of the newer and younger members of the faculty who had come from one of the southern schools. About the table could be heard the other exclamations while some of the older heads and those who knew Bennet best either remained silent or voiced half-hearted approval.

The young man who spoke of lynching, Donald Armstrong, became so excited he arose in his seat and shaking his fist at the air, his face almost purple, exclaimed:

"The brute! I knew it! I knew it! I always knew it would never do to educate 'niggers.' We must preserve the white race pure. I knew if we allowed them to be educated the next thing they would be wanting to marry our daughters. I wouldn't let him graduate. I'd flunk him. I'd expel him for such uppishness. We know, in the south how to handle such. We know how to keep them in their places."

For a few moments there was a general hubbub, with everyone voicing opinions and trying to speak at once. When noises lessened, Dean Sandager, his white hair thrown back from his fine high serried forehead, stood, stroked his patriarchal beard which covered his white

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shirt front, and pointing a deliberate finger at Armstrong, said:

"Hold on, Son, don't waste your breath yet. You're not in the south. I have been closely associated with this young man, Bennet, in the past four years, having been his adviser. I know his heart is clean, his soul white and his family good. If I had a daughter to trust to the care and keeping of a young man I know none to whom I would rather entrust her keeping than to Bennet. I'd be proud to have him as a son.

"I'm a man far along in years. I have watched this country grow; watched sentiments change and shift; watched events drift; I have learned, and I say with all the force within me, that prejudice based on color or race or religion is damnable and is the curse of the country.

"I am prejudiced against some men and women, but my prejudice is based on lack of character and morality, and culture. Prejudice on any other basis is damnable, narrow, and unjust. Besides, unless told I would not know that Bennet was of any race other than white. It is time we forgot races and saw men. It is time we quit pandering to the insincere or ignorant desires for caste distinctions.

"I have many excellent friends in the south. Most of them do not believe as you, Armstrong. And as for your kind it is best not to boast too violently of race purity. Your kind ought to be the last to talk that stuff when out of twelve million people you have spoiled the purity of more than four million by illicit and unwelcomed amalga-

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mations. You should be the last to shout that shibboleth, Son. The last to shout it.

"I suggest that before we do anything for which we should entertain later regrets we have the young man himself before us. Hear his side of matter. I'm sure he'll give a good account of himself."

Armstrong subsided and there were shouts and hand-clappings of approval when Dean Sandager had finished. As the latter seated himself, Dr. Dennig turned to him with:

"I have already summoned the young man and he ought to be here." Another tap of the bell, a hurried message and the door opened as Truman Bennet stepped before the faculty.

Dean Sandager, his heart yearning like a father's to the young man, stood as Bennet entered. Dr. Dennig, the president also rose. The others remained seated. Dean Sandager stepped to Bennet's side and escorted him to the table, the place where Miss Gregory had stood, she having retired to one of the chairs against the wall. Before Dean Sandager seated himself again he rested his hand on Bennet's shoulders as if to impart courage for the ordeal.

Dr. Dennig lost no time in coming to the point. "Bennet," he said, "You are faced with a very serious predicament. You are summoned here to say whether or not you shall be allowed to graduate with your class or be expelled from college. Upon your answer depends it whether the faculty votes for the one or the other. You can save yourself from trouble if you will here and before us all

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give us your word that you'll not see Miss Lauriston any more; that you will not communicate with her or in any way seek to associate with her.

"I may also say that your further association with her is distasteful to Miss Gregory, to some members of the faculty and would be decidedly so to the young lady's family. In fact a persistence in your attitude will mean not only a faculty vote but trouble, endless trouble for you both. What have you to say?"

Bennet listened to the words then with one hand ministerially thrust into his bosom where the coat was unbuttoned, with a voice so passion-spent that his words came with almost percussive explosiveness spoke. There was the agony of a tortured soul in every syllable, having sensed immediately the import of his summons. As he faced them with the confidence of youth, yet the gravity of age, he said:

"Gentlemen of the Faculty:—As I read your faces, hear your charges and study the gravity of your countenances I am led to ask myself whether I'm among Christians or heathens, leaders or slaves, friends or foes. I had thought that during my four years here I was among friends.

"This that you propose to do, in fact already have done, might easily be catalogued among the crimes of the ages. You have set yourselves to the task of preventing the most moral, the most human, most natural act of life, the perfectly cosmic mating of two souls.

"You threaten me with expulsion from your school. Not only that. You seek to deprive me of something

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I've earned and paid for in cash and honest effort. You may deny me certification of my accomplishment. You cannot withdraw that which I have absorbed under these old and stately elms and in these class rooms and under the guardianship of those of you whose lives are worthy of emulation.

"Therefore your proposal if carried out would fail of accomplishment except as it branded you as hide-bound, narrow and bigoted. Your action would but brand you as inhuman, unChristian — unmoral. That I differ from you in blood you may claim. Yet how false that claim. The blood of all men is human. Complexion is external. There is as royal blood in my veins as in yours — as in the best of you. The blood of kings pulses from my heart; the blood of the King of life and death; of God our King courses through my veins. Wherein are you more royal than I? How long is America to dwell in the gloom of prejudice? How long are men of thought and leadership to allow blind caste bigotry to shape our common destinies?

"I want my diploma as a right fully earned; as a matter of justice; as a matter of law. I've earned it by study, by expenditures, by loyalty. As for the halting of my course; the turning aside from my purpose; repudiating of my pledged word, first halt you the tides; reshape the course of day through night; still the wheels of the Universe, yet only death shall rob me of my will to, — right to love the one I love.—Unless it be the lady herself.

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“This breast of mine knows what a gem she is.” He waved his hand defiantly. “Keep your diploma, deny me, if you will, the honor of standing with my classmates and receiving certification in public at your hands. You cannot deny me my right to love.”

CHAPTER XIV

For a few moments after Bennet ceased speaking, the silence was overwhelming. Everyone present seemed to be holding his breath and gazing at the speaker as if transfixed. Bennet stood facing them, his head thrown back, not so much in an attitude of defiance as of waiting for the storm to break about his head for he expected to be bombarded with argument and possible threats and vituperation. Tears filled the eyes of Dean Sandager as pride in the manliness of the speech filled his heart. He had formed a love for Bennet that was almost that of a father for a son.

When Bennet had waited, as he thought sufficiently long, he turned and was about to walk from the table. A voice halted him. It was that of Professor Armstrong.

"Bennet," Truman turned to face the speaker. "A Negro is a Negro and never can be a white man. That's the law in my country. You—"

No one ever knew just what he would have said for Dean Sandager raised his hand for silence and uttered just one word. It came like a sharp and cutting crash of lightning, without the thunder. "Stop!" With the word there blazed a menacing anger in his eyes. To Bennet he turned in a kindly soothing voice, said: "You may go, Son." Dr. Dennig also seemed to recover himself and added, "Yes, go."

As the door closed, Dean Sandager arose, deliberately, slowly and stroked his beard. "I come from New England

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stock," he said. "My people always taught me to respect manhood and character. I know no prejudices except that based on personal dislike because a man's heart is black through lack of principle. The boy is right. As right as God is right. If we do such an unGodly thing as is proposed this institution will rot and crumble to decay, for it will have proven false to every principle on which it is built. It will belie every truth it has taught. And if we do vote for such a thing I'll quit my post for the lecture platform and will tell the world what hypocrites we are.

"What have we to do with the personal affairs of one who has broken no college rule? Do we want to brand ourselves, as he says, as unChristian? I think not. I for one will take part in no such action, and if it comes to a vote I'll vote no, though I vote alone."

"Here too, here too, here too," came from three or four of the older men. Several of the younger professors and instructors remained silent. Three or four, however, among them Armstrong, cried: "I'll quit before I'll stand for it. Yes, yes, yes."

Dr. Dennig rapped for order. After securing silence he said: "Well, Gentlemen, it is a sorry moment but I'll put the matter to a vote. I would say, however, before we undertake it that whatever our action let us decide it to be secret and not for the public."

"If the board does right, I'll agree, otherwise I won't," stated Dean Sandager. "I have lived right. According to my belief in Christ and Christianity. I'll die that way.

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And I'll never give in to foolish, narrow prejudice so unjust as color prejudice is," he added.

"Why the whole world is prejudiced against black men," shouted Armstrong. "Why blame prejudice on the South; every section is prejudiced against him."

"Yes, the world may be prejudiced but that doesn't make it right. And I deny that all the world is prejudiced. To the shame of some Americans they have tried to make it so — but not all — and it will never be so. God never intended it to be so."

"You northerners are prejudiced, just as we are," retorted Professor Armstrong.

"Those who are, are honestly so, even though they have been misled by your propaganda and lies. You of the south are hypocrites."

"You lie."

Dean Sandager's eyes blazed. "Young man," he said, "I'm old and can't resent your insult in the only proper way, therefore I'll control myself. I say, however, I do not lie and leave it to the fair minds of the remainder of the board to say if I do.

"I say, southerners are hypocrites in their prejudice. We of the north who are misled into evidences of prejudice have been honestly misled and blinded by propaganda and false utterances of one kind or another or some low passion has been persuaded. When we are thus misled and form a prejudice we live up to that prejudice by avoiding contact with the man or race against whom we feel the prejudice. You of the south shout race inferiority,

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and prejudice and yet have all sorts of associations, legitimate and illegitimate with those against whom you are prejudiced.

“If I am prejudiced against a man I want nothing to do with him; neither his service nor his presence. You of the South shout prejudice but want to hold onto that against which you are prejudiced; want to keep it near you; want it to nurse you, feed you, support you, toil for you, create your wealth, minister to your wants higher and lower. Fie on such prejudice and fie on you Professor Armstrong with your hypocritical protests. Why, all your south is you owe to the Negro, even your education.”

Armstrong had arisen from his seat and was walking menacingly toward the Dean by this time. Several of the men sought to halt him. He swung them aside and strode on. Dean Sandager stood like an indignant deity.

“Let him come,” he said. “Let him come. I can take care of myself.” Armstrong was withered by the fire of the old man’s eyes and halted when within a few feet of the elder man. When he halted, Dean Sandager continued:

“Yes, Armstrong, you’re a hypocrite and a coward.”

The two men glared at each other for a minute. Everyone was breathless with pent up emotion. Even Dr. Dennig seemed petrified into inaction. Finally he recovered himself enough to rap excitedly with his fist on the table for order. “Gentlemen, remember. Be dignified. Be dignified.”

In order to prevent further clashing he hurriedly added:

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"We'll vote by secret ballot on the question. The secretary will prepare the ballots."

"Vote secretly," exploded Dean Sandager. "Vote secretly? My God. Quit ye like men! Quit ye like men!" he urged, using the Biblical quotation he had often used in exhorting his classes during lectures.

Despite his urging the secret ballots were prepared and placed at each man's side. After a sufficient time had been allowed for judgment, Dr. Dennig asked: "Has everybody voted?" He was assured that they had and ballots were collected, placed at his side. The secretary counted them off. There were twenty-four men present and twenty-four had voted. The secretary read off the votes aloud.

They were: "Yes, yes, no, no, no, yes, no, yes, yes, yes, yes, no," the count was becoming agonizing. The secretary still droned the count. No, no, no, no, no, no, yes, yes, no, no, no, yes." Audible sighs were heard all about the table as the count ended. It was found that Bennet's diploma would not be withheld.

"Thank God!" breathed Dean Sandager. "God is a Just God and Right has won."

"I resign," shouted Armstrong. "Damned if I'll stay at any such college."

"You were just a little ahead of me, young man. I was about to ask for your resignation," quietly offered Dr. Dennig. Dean Sandager turned and grasped the President's hand, shaking it warmly. There were tears of nervous joy in his eyes. He could not speak. Dr. Dennig,

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however, returned the handshake with: "You're right. I thank you for showing me the way."

Dean Sandager shook his head. "No. It's you. I never doubted you, Dennig."

The faculty meeting adjourned in confusion immediately. Dean Sandager and Dr. Dennig leaving the room together, others of the faculty departing in groups discussing the affair and its result. Professor Armstrong was loud in his denunciations of all who voted against him.

No one gave heed to him, however, as he walked from the room grumbling: "I won't stay with a lot of cowards and weak sentimentalists. I'll go where real white men live."

Despite the efforts of the faculty to keep the matter secret, Professor Rumor, head of one of the most important departments of any college group, soon had the story whispered about and discussed from various angles. Members of Bennet's class, however much they knew of the affair, liked him so well they never mentioned the subject in his presence.

Events moved rapidly toward commencement and the attending functions. When Miss Gregory found that she could not prevent Bennet and Lida meeting or communicating, she was at her wit's end. She hesitated to write south to Lida's father, fearing that such publicity would follow the impetuous old southerner that her school would be injured. She hoped that separation for the summer would serve to cool the friendship. The more she thought of this possibility the more she became convinced that this

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would be the fact. How little she knew the strength of the bond between the two or their natures!

Instead of thoughts of separation, these two, in their moments of meeting, were planning how to continue their communications and finally their plans for wedding. Each resolved to return home at the end of their work and inform their parents.

"Do you think that wise," Bennet asked, as they strolled under the elms of the East side a few days before commencement, happily reverting to the topic always uppermost in their minds.

"It's the only fair thing to do, dear," Lida returned. "Daddy may rave, for a time, but" (with the confidence of youth) "I'll make him see it my way. I know I will."

"I don't know, Blossom Girl," Bennet replied, using the pet name which always awakened tenderness in him most deeply as he addressed her. She had always seemed to him like some fresh blooming wood blossom, he explained when he first addressed her in that term. "Old men are rather positive at times. And I'm afraid harm will come to you. Why go south at all? Why not get married and go to my home then go away as we had planned, writing the news to your father."

"That's not a bit like you, Truman. It wouldn't be fair. And I want to be fair. I will be fair in all I do. I love you with all my heart and always will but I love my father, too. Remember he's been father and mother to me for a long time. I'll be as fair with him as I will always be with you."

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"Bless your heart," he breathed tenderly. "Have it your way. I feel though, that we are in for trouble under that plan."

"Why let trouble bother us? You have my heart," she shyly answered.

"Well," he yielded, "I'll let you go but you must return to me in a month or sooner. You know we sail on my commission shortly after and I'm to take my best beloved bride with me."

"I'll go home and see my folks then meet you and be married. I'll also tell my people of our plans."

Under the elms they strolled arm in arm unmindful of all else save themselves till the warning clock on the First Meeting House told of the hour to retire.

"Oh, I didn't know it was so late," exclaimed Lida as she counted the strokes of the midnight bell. Leaning more heavily on Bennet's arm, she indicated a wish to return and the two retraced their steps.

As they reached the steps of the school the two stood facing each other. A young moon was shyly peeping, through the heavy branches, on the stillness of the scene.

"God has richly blessed me. My heart is full. I'll wade through death itself for you, Little Girl." There was that vibration in his voice and such seriousness in his face that Lida almost felt a pain of happiness in her heart.

"I like you best, when you say things like that," she breathed tenderly. "They seem so real and true. You don't know how happy you make me." The great mother impulse in the girl caused her to cling closer to Bennet

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and to reach her hands up to his face and caress his cheeks.

"He has blessed me, too, Man of Mine." She blushed as she uttered the words and realized what she had unconsciously said. The feeling in her heart had forced them to her lips, the woman in her overcoming the maidenliness. She was so confused she kissed him suddenly and ran lightly up the steps and was gone.

Bennet watched her retreating form lift like a vision up the steps, and stood waiting for her to turn and look at him again. He stood so for a few moments and when she failed to look back, bared his head, lifted his face to the sky and said, fervently: "God grant that I shall be always worthy of her — that I'll always make her happy."

He turned to leave, his soul still in the universe of his love. Lida reached her room and looked from her window. He failed to turn but she blew him a kiss from the tips of her fingers then sank by the window sill where tears of sheer happiness filled her eyes.

Commencement day found the college yard filled with hundreds of shouting, laughing, handshaking graduates of the famous old school, all returned to do honors to their alma mater and to renew friendships as well as to give accounts of their activities since the previous gathering.

Campus was decorated as only college youth, with unlimited imagination can decorate for their friends and relatives on festive occasions. Fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, all proud of their individual candidate for degree strolled about the grounds, meeting friends of other years or renewing acquaintances formed since arrival.

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In their caps and gowns the candidates for degrees were assembling under the guidance of their chief marshal and aids. The scene was one of kaleidoscopic, ever changing colorations. The band was discoursing lively tempting music; here and there couples unable to resist the appeal were swaying to the strains. Prominent among those gathered were the parents and family of Bennet.

The father, a dignified, kindly-eyed man, with a smiling, genial face, hair turned iron gray, walked erect, head lifted, about the yard, his wife, a delightfully motherly soul on his arm. Behind them or at their side, never still, fluttered a daughter, laughingly waving to acquaintances, newly made or those of longer standing, a charming bit of human vitality, a bit chic and yet wholesome. This was certainly a marked family.

Mrs. Bennet was rather grave in her serenity and seemed preoccupied with pride in the popularity of her son, her eyes following him everywhere as he moved from one group of friends to another. This was a proud moment for her as well.

As they walked about, Bennet hailed them in passing, with:

"Hello, father. Having a good time?"

The elder man only smiled. Bennet lifted the serene face of his mother and kissed her cheeks.

"Mother I'm happy today." His happiness showing in his face.

"You ought to be, my son. This is a day I've long prayed to come to you. Make the most of it."

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"Yes, boy, it's your day," the father added. "Don't mind us. We'll get along."

"I've only one other wish, Truman," Mrs. Bennet offered in dignified tenderness.

"What's that, mother?" he questioned as he placed an arm about her waist.

"That is to see you happily married. When that comes then I'll be completely happy," she replied looking steadfastly at him in her maternal way.

"I like that," chimed in the sister. "Where do I fit in this merry scheme. It seems not at all." At this all laughed, while the mother turned to her saying, "Your time'll come soon enough. Soon enough."

"Mother, I'm happy and I hope to be happily married soon."

The mother's face clouded for a fleeting moment, then she said, "Well, all I ask is that she is a good girl and that you are well mated."

"I'll tell you all about her when we get home."

"Got her all picked out?" laughed the sister, clapping her hands. "Oh,—how romantic. Won't the wedding be fun?" at the conjuring up of which she laughed again and clapped her hands.

Before they could say more the band began to sound assembly call for the parade to chapel for awarding of degrees. Slowly the procession marched across the campus to the half-sad-march music heard from year to year. The girls of Miss Gregory's school had already been seated in a special gallery of the chapel as invited guests. In this

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group was Lida, her eyes strained for the sight of but one, her heart a-flutter.

This was her first attendance at such an affair and the experience was thrilling. Her eyes sought Bennet and once having located him she saw no one else during the entire program. After the orations and the distribution of the degrees the assembly was dismissed. Truman sought Lida as the crowd passed out and laid the diploma, so hardly won, in her hands. Without being noticed the girl gracefully and with a feeling of tenderness that it belonged to him, raised it to her lips.

There was time for no more. Bennet was called to his class for the return march to the campus and Lida rushed to her room to depart for her home. It had been arranged for her to leave immediately, Miss Gregory wishing to get her started for her southern home as quickly as possible. It was only because Lida had asserted with positiveness that she would not go till after the commencement exercises that Miss Gregory gave in to that extent. She had wished the girl to leave before commencement was over, in order to separate her as soon as possible from her lover. Lida won her way, however, to the extent of this compromise in plans made for her. All this had been explained to Bennet the night before and was understood.

When Lida reached her room she carefully packed the diploma in her trunk where it would be protected and with time to say adieu to but few of the girls remaining, was whirled away to catch the Federal express for the South.

CHAPTER XV

Where all was festivity and lightness yesterday, today there is solemnity, silence and gloom. This was true of the campus at the university after graduation. Where one day the lawns were alive with throbbing, laughing, happy humanity, the next the place is deserted, students having departed for their homes or summer activities, their parents returned to their homes and the buildings closed.

In the midst of a scene like this an express team drove up to one of the dormitories and with clatter and clutter, the driver, with his helper, bundled trunks and bags into his team. As the last piece of luggage was placed on the team, Professor Armstrong stepped out of the building to pay the driver and get his check.

At that moment Dr. Tansey turned a corner, coming from the gymnasium where he had been winding up his work for the year preparatory to departing also.

"Hello, Armstrong," was his greeting. "Where're you bound? Looks as if," nodding in the direction of the baggage on the team, "you're going on a long journey, as they say." This said with a laugh.

"Yes, it's a long journey. I don't intend to come back. I'm going South where white men are white men and stand by one another," he vowed.

"Oh, bosh, can't you forget that Bennet episode? How some people nurse a grudge! The boy's all right. I know him," Dr. Tansey exclaimed impatiently.

"You're another of those soft hearted sentimentalists.

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To hell with you," Professor Armstrong exploded.

"Oh, don't be a grouch. Have done with that bosh. He's a man, and a whiter man than you, in many respects. Here, we take them as we find them, white or black."

"Well, I'm off. Got to catch a train.—Good-bye!" Professor Armstrong ended the conversation by offering his hand in farewell.

"Good-bye, old man. Hope you have a pleasant vacation and land somewhere suitable in the fall. If you don't," with a sly teasing wink, you may come back here and learn something. Good-bye. — Oh, by the way," as an after thought. "I may see you this summer. I'm going South shortly myself to study some features of yellow fever contagions and typhoid. I'll be making some experiments and may run into you."

"If you come, let me give you a tip. Leave your northern ideas up here. Don't bring any of your equality theories down there. Our people don't stand for that. We've got our ideas about how to handle the blacks. And we do handle them. We won't have anybody interfering. If you remember that you'll get along, otherwise you won't. —Look me up if you're in my district.—Good-bye."

With that he turned and was off, walking rapidly across the yard toward the street leading to the station. Dr. Tansey, with his characteristic whimsical smile playing about his lips watched the retreating figure.

"Conceited, prejudiced ass! Poor fellow! He won't admit the world moves," he murmured. "He thinks because his skin is white he's supreme and a black man's dirt un-

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der his feet, even one with so little colored blood as Bennet.—And the peculiar thing is that there are so many like him. They want their way for themselves and everybody else. They can be brutes, coarse, inhuman animals and yet because they are white they are all right. What bosh! What fallacy! And the funny part of it all is that we,—most of us, let them have their way.—Uphold them in it.—I suppose it's because we dislike bother and fuss. We had one big fuss," he continued his musings, "over the same kind of question and I suppose want to forget about it now. Just the same, they're wrong and we're wrong. We're to blame, too. We've been fed up on a lot of propaganda about white supremacy—the white man's burden and a lot of other rot till we half believe the stuff ourselves. That's what's the matter with us.—I wonder how long that sort of thing will last? I wonder. Well, I'll see some of this race question myself this summer first hand, then I'll know."

Dr. Tansey was still following the departing figure of Professor Armstrong as he soliloquized. He stood still gazing in the direction in which Armstrong had now disappeared after his soliloquy ceased, his mind ruminating on the question. Suddenly his thoughts returned to the present and he whirled and walked away from the college. His mind was indistinctly filled with pictures of atrocities and cruelties of which he had read as practiced in the South.

CHAPTER XVI

Back in the little town of Bremen, Bennet, with his father, mother and sister, arrived without incident, after the graduation exercises. The first few days of the return were filled with social affairs, visitations and congratulations on the part of the friends of the family for the young man. There were letters from Lida, on her way home and replies such as only two happy lovers, separated for a time can write.

It was after the receipt of one of these one morning that Bennet's face became serious and his attitude thoughtful. While in this mood his father came upon him. Bennet still held the letter in his hand and was looking off into the distance.

"What's the matter, boy? — When will you marry the girl? — Why don't you tell us about her?" he asked without giving the young man a chance to reply.

"That's just what I was thinking about.—Telling you." He looked at his father.

"No better time. Who is she? — and what's she like?" The elder man asked.

Father and son had always been frank with each other, a comradeship having been established between them from the time Truman was a lad and preserved more closely than is the case between most fathers and sons.

"Well, Dad. She's a wonder."

"They all are at your time of life," he answered philo-

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sophically. "It takes time and patience to prove that. Still what's she like?"

"She's a southern girl, whose family can be traced back generations and generations; to old Colonial days; to old slavery days," Bennet answered proudly.

"What! You don't mean to say she's a southern white girl?"

"Yes."

The elder man shook his head solemnly and sadly as he exclaimed, "Poor boy! Poor boy! Impossible! Impossible!"

What's impossible about that?"

"Everything," he exclaimed hopelessly. "Everything. Forget it. Don't think of such a thing. You're dooming yourself. — You'll be throwing your life away. Don't think of it. I've brought you up — you and your sister — in an atmosphere and midst environments where you would not be brought into contact with such a thing. I did this for your best. You don't know what prejudice is. You don't know what you are planning for yourself.

"Forget it, Boy. Forget her. There are estimable girls up here in this section who would make you an excellent wife, and a charming daughter for me and your mother; one that we could welcome into the family with pride and with loving hearts. We can't do that with this girl. Besides, there are white girls of the colored race, fully as charming, intelligent and beautiful as any white girl in the south. You could be happy with one of them. You will never be with this girl. Besides you will never marry her.

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—Her parents will not allow it. No, Boy, forget her. Does she know that you are of mixed blood?" he asked.

"Yes, she knows all. And that makes no difference to her. It did at first but she loves me and I love her."

The elder man bowed his head in his hands. "Forget her, Boy. It will only mean pain and suffering for you both otherwise."

"No, Dad. I've given my word in pledge to her. And she's given hers. I'll not give her up as long as she holds to her mind. Why Dad, I couldn't and be a man. I won't. That's all. I won't."

"Youth feeds at the breast of impatience," exclaimed the elder man half to himself. "It is only when time has dried up the food sources that experience can gain a hearing."

"You're wrong, Father. Wise youth observes and studies the experiences of others then maps his chart according to the drift of the winds of his own life and the strength of his ship — his soul."

"I'll tell you, Boy. In setting your course as you've planned you're running into the trade winds of prejudice and proscription. You're bringing harm to the girl you say you love; alienating her from her own people — her own family; her outlook on life has been different than yours; bringing her into a life of loneliness. She will be deserted by her own people."

"Won't you and mother accept her?"

"Yes, Boy. We'll accept any good girl whom you bring to us. We are not prejudiced. You're asking a mighty big sacrifice of her when you ask her to quit her own people."

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"What do you mean, 'own people?' Of what race am I — are you — mother — sister?" Bennet asked impatiently. "Are we not all Americans?"

"The South does not see it that way, Boy."

"We don't intend to live in the south," he challenged.

"You'll be lucky to be allowed to live at all, if you go down there for her."

"I'll go just the same, if necessary. We intend to live our own lives."

"There's no such thing as 'individual lives,'" the elder man contended. "Your acts will have an influence on many others, either directly or indirectly. Her family for instance, — and your own."

"Why should this be?"

"Don't ask why. It is so. A matter of cause and effect; a natural law. If you marry you won't be accepted by her family and there'll be many antagonisms."

"But, Dad, you don't know her. She's too big hearted to permit such a condition. Besides we're not marrying the races or the families of each other. I marry her. She marries me."

"Yes, yet you've got to live in some community. You'll be isolated on either hand. You don't know the pride of races as I do, nor pride of families."

"Yet I know that I'm of both races."

"Yes, but prejudice and narrowness can show themselves in so many bitterly hurtful ways to sensitive souls. I know. I've been through it all. So has your mother. No, Truman. I strongly advise against it. You're of age

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and I can't command you, else I'd forbid it. I predict for you, though, if you persist in your fool-hardy act, misery and failure. — And these things in you, my first born, will bring an old man's heart in sorrow to the grave.

"Oh, Truman! Truman, my first born, my pride! Don't wrench my heartstrings till I fall into my grave a broken man. Don't do this monstrously rash thing. Give up this foolish love. Be a man and master yourself."

"Yes, but of honor? What about my honor — my pledged and sacred word?" he asked.

"There are rights above such honor as you cling to," stated the father. "There is no honor in rashness that would wreck many lives."

"What about breaking the heart of the girl who's trusted you with her love — her happiness?" Bennet asked.

"Her love, with her southern slave-holding background can't but be passion; her happiness in you but visionary. There is no real love there. When passion dies her love will die," the elder man prophesied.

"Never. Her heart's too simple and honest. I have her happiness in my keeping. Let her fail me if she will. I'll not fail her nor myself. Not if all hell prevails," Truman protested. "When you speak as you do I can't believe you ever knew love. You married for convenience and have lived a sham life; outwardly honorable but inwardly hollow."

"Tut-tut-tut, Boy. Let's not quarrel. Hasty words only mean sorrow and regret," the elder Bennet ended, walking away.

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Father and son held no further talks on the subject, each seeming to avoid the topic. At each mail, however, when letters would be received by Truman, in a handwriting all had come to know, the elder Bennet would watch his son reading eagerly the written words, see the lighting on the face and the happiness for the remainder of the day and shake his head sadly. Mrs. Bennet, though told by her husband, gave no outward appearance of knowing the state of affairs. She sensed in her woman's way, however, the depth of her son's regard for the girl and pitied him at the same time that she hoped the girl would prove as loyal as she knew Truman would be. Mrs. Bennet's motherly understanding was shown a few days following when there was no letter. As she passed his chair at the breakfast table she allowed her hand to rest for a moment on his shoulder. Truman was gloom while his sister teased him about the girl and the letter that failed to appear. When on the third morning no mail was received, the elder man was tempted to utter an "I told you so," but a warning look from the mother prevented him. The sister also out of consideration began to dislike the girl who did not write to her brother when he had been expecting and had been receiving daily communications.

Days lengthened into more than a week when on the morning of the tenth day when no letter had been received in answer to repeated telegraph messages, Truman announced, at breakfast, that he was going away. The elder Bennet's head bowed, as he muttered, "I know it."

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Mrs. Bennet's eyes filled with tears though she gave no evidence of her feeling.

Bennet's packing was hastily done and when ready to leave he kissed his mother. As he did so, she murmured, in his ear, "God keep you from harm, my boy — and bring her back to us." For response, Truman gave her a bear hug and a resounding kiss. When he parted with his father at the station just as the train was pulling out, the two gripped hands in man-to-man fashion, the youth looking steadily and honestly into the eyes of his elder.

"Whatever happens, Boy, remember we are yours. Play fair. Take care of yourself and come back as soon as possible. You're going into the devil's own country. God keep you safely."

CHAPTER XVII

Dr. Tansey, when he returned to his office after the encounter with Professor Armstrong began to make ready his own affairs preparatory to departing for the south on his mission of science, and his study of malignant forms of yellow fever and typhoid. When all his affairs were placed in order he boarded a train for New York, from which place he set out by boat for Charleston, South Carolina, his first stopping place.

His ship had been out two days before he was able to be about the deck, owing to his inability to withstand the effects of seasickness. No matter how many times he had taken trips he always was seasick the first two days out. Because of this illness he failed to learn that another passenger, with whom he was acquainted was also taking the trip. This was Truman Bennet.

In mid afternoon on the third day out, Dr. Tansey felt able to forsake his stateroom for a little time on deck and climbed the saloon stairs. The effort was a struggle to him, in his weakened state but he finally made the distance and was resting his hands on the railpost to steady himself as well as to find a location unengaged when he almost lost the strength of his legs and sank back down the stairs. He gazed across the deck straight into the eyes of Truman Bennet. Bennet could not believe his eyes for a moment; when he realized it was the Doctor, he sprang across the deck in two leaps and was just in time to save

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the physician from falling. The latter's face had gone pale with surprise and pleasure.

"Dr. Tansey" Bennet exclaimed wringing the hand he had clasped.

"Well, Bennet," the other returned. "You're the last man I expected to see on this boat. What are you going south for?"

"I'll ask the same of you, Doctor? Where are you bound? Jove, this is a treat."

"I'm bound on a scientific mission. I suppose you'll say the same thing. I'll bet I can guess, though," as an after thought. "I thought you were cured of that blow on the head you got last fall. Too bad! Too bad! My surgery is getting way off. I thought I had you cured."

Both men laughed happily, as Truman piloted the other to a seat at his side of the ship. After Bennet had seen that the doctor was comfortable he also took a seat.

"Have a cigar," said Dr. Tansey, tendering Bennet the case as he took one himself.

"No, thank you. Don't smoke."

"This is off-season now. You won't be breaking training by smoking. I won't tell the coach," chafed the doctor.

"You know I never smoked," Bennet smiled back.

"No, I don't know anything about it. Put it this way. I never caught you smoking. How's that?"

The two men laughed heartily again. Doctor Tansy was happy as a boy. He was very fond of Bennet, in his own way.

"Where's the young woman? I didn't know she was in

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the South. What's she doing down here this time of year?"

"Somewhere up in the Palmetto state, I don't know where. — Have the address. — Going to find out."

Dr. Tansey looked at the young man shrewdly — studiously, for some minutes then asked, "Does she know who you are?"

"Foolish question. Do you think I'd deceive the girl I loved?"

"I beg pardon, Old Boy. I wanted to be sure.—You're either a fool or you've got the nerve of ten brass monkeys. — No fool like a young lover," added the doctor, paraphrasing the old saw. "Know anybody down here?"

"Not a soul that I'm aware of."

"Well, you'll have to be very careful. These people are very funny. They're very touchy on the race question. So, talk but little. Mind your own business." — After a considerable pause.—"What you need is a guardian angel — or a keeper. — You'll get along, I guess."

"Oh, I realize the dangers. I got an idea from Professor Armstrong," vouchsafed Bennet.

"By the way, he's down here somewhere," continued Dr. Tansey. "He's rabid on the subject. But he's as mild as a June day compared with some. I don't believe I'm going to get along down here. So have a care. Have a care, son. Where're you stopping, when you get to Charleston?"

"Don't know. Some hotel."

"Humph! — Better come with me — till you start inland."

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"All right, Doctor. Thanks, very many thanks."

The remainder of the voyage passed very pleasantly. Doctor Tansey recovered his sea legs rapidly and before the trip ended was debating the Negro question with the best of them on board. He defended the black man so vehemently that the captain of the ship deemed it wise to caution him, when they were just about to enter Charleston Harbor. Dr. Tansey and Bennet were, as was their habit, standing far up in the bow of the ship when the Captain saw them and leaned out of the pilot house to shout:

"Hey, Doctor!"

Dr. Tansey and Bennet whirled.

"Come up here," he beckoned. The two men lost no time in accepting the invitation. When they stepped into the wheelhouse, the Captain gave the wheel to another officer and turned: "You men are from up North. I've heard some of your talk and I want to caution you for your own good. Better let that subject alone down here. It's a southern question and we're — they're settling it in their own way."

"Why do you people insist on having your own way with the question?" asked Dr. Tansey.

"Because we know the black man best. We love the black man — in his place."

"Under your feet, I suppose?"

"Well, pretty much so. You've got to keep him down in his place. This is a white man's country. This is a white man's civilization."

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“Are you afraid to let anybody else have a little bit of it? The white man is supposed to be fair. I always hear the boast about Anglo-Saxon fair play. I see but little of it, though, as I travel about. I’d like to see more. Why do you people in the South insist on foisting your beliefs upon everybody else? Don’t you give anybody else credit for knowing anything besides yourself. Are you afraid of your own laws — of your own selves. You act as if you were not sure of your own ground.”

“No sir. — No sir. Not where the Negro comes into the discussion. They’re no good. Never were any good — and never will be any good.”

“If I remember history at all, they were very good when the plantation owners marched away to fight to keep them slaves, and they remained behind caring for the families and farms of those who were fighting to hold them in bondage. — It strikes me *that* is a pretty good sort of a man to cling to. Anglo-Saxon civilization can’t show anything any better than that. Besides, though you may not admit it, the Negro is the bone and sinew of your financial and economic structure. The South lives off the Negro.

“It strikes me that they are pretty good when they are the backbone of your country economically. They may be lazy and shiftless but it seems to me they do all the work; at least all the real work. Of course, your white collar work — work in the shade; where the hours are short and the labor nil you people shine. I’ll bet there’d be an awful howl sent to heaven, if by any chance, there should be

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a sudden exodus of black men from this section. Why your industry would be paralyzed.

"You tell that stuff to the Marines," Dr. Tansey continued. "I think the white race all over the world has been too easily gulled by you folks and your doctrines. Most of the blacks I've come into contact with have been at least on par with the whites, and better than many of those we welcome from European countries. No, Captain. Thank you for your advice. Prudently, it is well given, but just the same it's the white race that's largely at fault, and it's time the white race got onto its job. You people are blessed and don't know it."

"Just the same, you'd better mind your own business and keep mum on the Negro question, if you want to stay here."

He took the wheel again, as if to end the conversation. Dr. Tansey and Bennet left the pilot house for the deck below and stood at the rail as the ship passed Fort Sumter, lapped by the muddy waters of the harbor. As the ship rounded up to her pier, from the wharves of cotton bales, barrels of resin, and other products waiting to be shipped North, there rose, seemingly a small battalion of Negro stevedores and roustabouts, shouting, laughing, singing and dancing, waiting with eager hands to grasp the hawsers that would moor the ship so they could begin their task of unloading and reloading the vessel. At the passenger gangplank stood a dozen or more boys of all shades, hands covered with white gloves, ready to step aboard ship

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and assist the passengers in debarking and departing for their various destinations.

Dr. Tansey and Bennet stood at the rail watching the scene. Bennet, unaccustomed to the sight of so many black faces was awestruck. Dr. Tansey had experienced scenes of animation such as this many times in his travels. After the two had stood in silence for a time, allowing Bennet to absorb the variety of the life, Dr. Tansey turned to him with:

“There, Bennet, is your first rub with and against the Negro problem as the South faces it. Just watch those fellows unload ship. Yet the Captain calls them no good, lazy and shiftless. Could you get a white man to work like that in this climate? I guess not.”

CHAPTER XVII

"Why there are more black than white people here!" exclaimed Bennet as they were shown to their rooms in the Great Southern Hotel, after their ride from the ship.

"Not quite, but almost," answered Dr. Tansey.

"And they seem to be minding their own affairs."

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

Both men were standing at the window of their hotel watching the panorama passing before them on the street below. There were well dressed colored men passing along the street; well dressed white men and women; some ragamuffins, pedlars, persons in automobiles with Negro chauffeurs, and tip carts drawn by mules and driven by black men, winding in and out in front of automobiles and street cars. Except for the number of black, brown, yellow and white faces, the scene might easily have been one of any large bustling northern city.

As the two men stood looking, suddenly a street car came along to the intersection of the street just as a dump-cart driven by a tall rather aged Negro and drawn by a mule, was crossing. The cart was in the middle of the street before the street car reached it. Dr. Tansey and Bennet looked for the car to halt to let the tip cart pass. What was their surprise and shock to see the motorman clang his bell and drive the car straight into the tip cart.

There was a resounding crash of breaking wood, an unearthly scream from the driver — and a thud of mule and man to the ground where the car shoved the mass along

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for ten or fifteen feet crunching wood, bones and flesh in one mass. Bennet turned sick. Dr. Tansey closed his eyes at the sight, then opened them again with "My God!" on his lips. As they looked the motorman dismounted from his vestibule, after backing his car off the mass, went to the scene, looked at the mule, then into the mutilated face of the driver. After discovering that he was nobody known to him he threw the hat carelessly down on the face again, mounted his car, while the conductor with the aid of bystanders, tried to pull the mass off the track. Failing in this way they left the mule in the street, backed the car to a turnout and continued on their way.

As they started away, Dr. Tansey and Bennet made for the door. Dr. Tansey turned to the young man, and almost shouted the command: "Stay here." He rushed to the street, muttering, "I never saw anything so deliberate. The brute. The brute."

When he reached the spot, he could hear the exclamation: "Too bad. Too bad." He thought they were pitying the driver, till one of the men added: "Yes, that mule's worth one hundred and forty dollars."

"Mules be damned," exclaimed Dr. Tansey. "What about the man!"

"Him?—Humph. You can get a nigger anywhere. Mules are valuable."

Dr. Tansey, his being burning with indignation bent over the prostrate form to see if the man was alive. As he knelt, from the crowd came the words: "Who's he? Who's he. Some stranger. Some nigger-loving stranger?"

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Dr. Tansey stood erect, his eyes blazing, "You're a lot of brutes," he exclaimed. "Cold blooded brutes." There were menacing sounds in the crowd but no action started. Soon the animal ambulance arrived and man and beast were piled into the same vehicle to be hauled away. The foreman of the street cleaning department in that district arrived and ordered the spot sanded. Dr. Tansey went back to his room, muttering, "This is humanity. This is civilization. No attempt — not even the semblance of an attempt to arrest the man for cold blooded murder."

Dr. Tansey was still laboring under tense excitement when he returned to his room. Bennet was pacing the floor and declaiming at the brutality of what he had seen.

"Why did you want me to remain here, Doctor?"

"Shut up and don't bother me," Dr. Tansey exclaimed petulantly in his excitement.

"But I can take care of myself. I'm no child," Bennet said.

"No, but you're a hot-blooded fool youth. — I don't want to see you die yet, — before you learn a few things. The best thing you can do is to keep quiet. You're in a strange land; among strange people. Hold your head — and your tongue, till you get your bearing. Till you're acclimated." With that he sank into a chair, his attitude the picture of gloom.

The spontaneity of his nature, however, refused to allow him to remain in such a state for long. The picture began to fade from his memory. Bennet had returned to the window, and was gazing on the passing show, intently

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interested in the new faces of the new show unfolding before him. Finally Dr. Tansey left his chair and stood at his side.

“What a wonderful land if it was only human,” he commented. “And this is an historic old city, too. Full of traditions. Full of memories — full of experiences from which could be woven many a romantic story that would thrill. All forgotten — All lost save to a few of the old families who hold aloof from the new, the modern, the bizarre and the cruel.

“Off there,” he continued, pointing to the right across the tops of mercantile and other buildings, “stands St. Michael’s Church, proud of its history, its traditions and its associations, venerable and venerated. Off here,” indicating another direction, “is St. Phillip’s, towering 200 feet in the air, its beacon shining at night, a welcome to all while at its foot, for the visitors, lie the remains of such men as Calhoun, Gadsden, Rutledge and Pickens. All men who have made the name of Charleston to stand out as the Athens of the South.

“And yet, with all its associations, and history of which to be proud, we can witness such a scene as we saw a little while ago. I wonder what the old Huguenots and Acadians would say if they could come back and see the intolerance, the bigotry and the hatred of these days! Bennet, the world’s wrong! At least this part of it. The quicker you and I get out of here the better.”

“I’d like to see more of this town before I go back

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home. Somehow I like the atmosphere of the place," Bennet offered with a wave of his hand.

"Well, I'm going to get out of here and up into the swamps where I can do my work and get away as quickly as possible. I advise you to lose no time in doing the same."

"Where and when do you plan to start?" Bennet asked.

"Armstrong told me that up near his country, along the Edisto River I'd find plenty of material for investigation and I guess I'll start for there as soon as possible."

"My nearest post office is Orangeburg. I go out into the country from there," said Bennet.

"Good, we'll go along together as far as there. Let's see. Orangeburg's on the way to Columbia," Dr. Tansey was studying his map intently. "You turn off at Branchville to the north from the main road leading to Augusta. It will be nice riding through rather picturesque country. We'll start in the morning, eh, Bennet?"

"All right. Meantime I'm going to look around this old town for a while."

"Better not go far, and let nothing disturb you.

"You know, not all southerners are barbarians such as we came into contact with today. They are human if you hit them right. The trouble is they are like a lot of northerners. Rather than make a fuss they simply shrug their shoulders and blind their eyes. There are a lot of them even in this old town. The trouble is, they've allowed themselves to be half convinced of what the evil-minded and coarser ones rant about and simply shrug their shoul-

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ders, draw about themselves the cloak of exclusiveness and let the rest of the world go by.

"You'll find that true all over the South. There are men and women, born in the South, bred in the South, who know that the South is wrong, but dislike disagreeable things, dislike trouble and bother, particularly since they derive some of the benefits of crushing an humbler people down. They fear public opinion. That's the trouble with this color question the world over. We Americans are a bunch of color cowards. Pure color cowards. And public opinion cowards. However, take your walk, look and learn but say nothing."

While Bennet was on his walk, finding many things of interest along the Battery and its immediate vicinity, studying the character of the houses and the persons he passed, Dr. Tansey was busy making arrangements for the trip up country. He stopped at several garages in attempts to negotiate for an automobile for the trip, but failed to get one to suit him till he came to Calhoun street, where there was a pretentious garage displaying a sign, "Autos for Hire." Stepping into the place he enquired:

"Where's the manager?"

One of the young Negro boys, standing in a group in the doorway pointed to an office within. Then opened the door. Just at the moment a short brown skinned man stepped out.

Dr. Tansey turned to him, "Where's the proprietor? I want to hire a rig."

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"Yes, sir. What kind of a rig do you want. I'm the proprietor."

Even Dr. Tansey was surprised at the announcement. He knew many black men were in business in the South, and thriving, but hardly expected to see one in charge of such a business, and speaking such language.

"I want to go to Orangeburg, in the morning. I've a friend with me, a stranger, and I want him to see some of the country."

"All right, Sir. What time? And where shall I call for you?"

"Better call at six o'clock at the Great Southern Hotel. We want to get a start and avoid the heat."

"Yes, Sir — All right, Sir. — Who shall I call for?"

"Dr. Tansey. We'll be up and waiting for you."

"Yes, Sir."

Having selected the car and arranged the details, Dr. Tansey returned to his hotel. Bennet had returned also and the two talked for some time over their experiences and observations, before dining, and adjourning for the wide veranda of the hotel where they sat in silence listening to the discussions of those about them.

Travel where you will in the South, one characteristic of the southerner you will always find. He is curious about strangers. They make it a point to always find out, if possible who every visitor is, where he hails from and what his business is. The native Charlestonians, who visited the Great Southern were no exceptions. From the time Dr. Tansey and Bennet had registered and shown

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active interest in the accident early in the day, there was a constant curiosity manifested about them.

Bennet had been followed and watched as he left the hotel for his walk and Dr. Tansey had been trailed. By some ties of neighborliness born of years of mingling communities are drawn together. Where each knows the other for miles around the presence of a stranger is signalled from house to house and native to native. Such was the case upon the arrival of Bennet and Dr. Tansey. The people of Charleston as in most southern communities guard their traditions, mannerisms, hobbies and oddities religiously. If you are prepared to join with them in their beliefs and practices you are welcomed. If you differ with them and differ positively you are marked and left to complete isolation.

There were a dozen or more men grouped about the veranda when Dr. Tansey and Bennet finished their meal and joined the assembly, taking seats at one side. All turned in their seats, to watch the two men, as they walked over to a corner of the veranda and took vacant seats preparatory to viewing the promenade of those on the street a floor below. Dr. Tansey was indulging in his cigar while Bennet was silent, his mind intent on Lida and his home.

After the two men had been seated long enough for the cigar Dr. Tansey was quietly smoking to be nearly consumed, the natives who had been sitting about grew restless because of their silence. On the veranda were men ranging from young to middle age, tall and wiry, for the

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most part, some dressed neatly and others not. They talked of every subject under the sun from farm prospects to fertilizer.

Dr. Tansey was just about to suggest retiring, having flicked his cigar stub into the street when one of his nearest neighbors turned with:

"Pretty nice town, ain't it, Stranger?"

"Very nice, what I've seen of it," offered Dr. Tansey. "You people take great pride in your city, as well you should. It has a history to be proud of."

The veranda guests were pleased. "Yes," continued the first speaker. "We're right pert proud of our town. Even of our blacks."

"They seem to be making great progress," commented Dr. Tansey. "I see they're in business and making themselves substantial citizens."

"Oh, as much as we allow. We don't plan to have them go too far. You know they out number us here."

"Yes, I recall. That's pretty true of nearly all the South, I believe," was Dr. Tansey's comment.

"Yes. That's the reason the problem looms so large to us down here. That's why you people up North don't understand it. — I can tell you're from up North by your talk."

"Yes, we are," Dr. Tansey admitted.

"As a matter of self-preservation we have to keep them in their places, even the best of them," continued his neighbor.

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"What do you mean, the best of them? I thought you people held them all to be the same."

"No, there are some who own property, are educated and substantial. But we can't allow them to put on any airs, else they'd think they were white folks and get fresh."

"Then it's not so much their inferiority as it is a matter of self-preservation," suggested Dr. Tansey.

"I'd not say that," suggested another of the group. "A black man is a black man and can't be compared with a white man no matter how much money he accumulates, or how educated."

Dr. Tansey shrugged his shoulders. "I can't understand you people and your arguments," he said.

"You don't believe a Negro is the equal of a white man, do you?" he was asked.

"Since you ask me, I'll tell you. I believe in the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. To my mind there are only two kinds of men in this country. In fact, in the world—good men and bad men. Color neither makes goodness nor badness. The mere color white, *per se*, is not a badge of superiority, purity or goodness.

"As to whether one man is or is not the equal of another, that wholly depends on mental ability, character and the quality of man he is. A man may be white and be the most desperate and vile being in the world. He may be black, yellow or red and be the same. All depends on his environment and circumstances of existence. I think the World War fully demonstrated that."

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"I don't give a damn how educated a black man is; how much money he has accumulated, how much character, as you call it, he may have, God never made a black man to be the equal of the white, and no nigger is as good as I am. We were made to preserve civilization, to further culture and to rule. And we do rule here in the South," exploded the southerner.

"I hate a Negro," he continued. "They are all brutes no matter how much education or culture they have. Under the skin they are brutes. We know the Negro down here."

Dr. Tansey shrugged his shoulders, as he replied: "I can't understand that instinct which makes a man hate a thing or animal and yet keep that animal so close to him as domestics are to your households. If I dislike a Chinaman I don't want a Chinese cook. If I dislike a black man I don't want one about me or my house. On that premise your position is faulty and your shoutings fallacious. You people are all wrong. And the sooner you find it out the better for the country. You can't always keep subdued and under your heel a people who have made the advances the blacks have even in the face of all odds.

"Besides aren't you preparing your own funerals? What a man sows that shall he also reap. No words were ever truer. Right now, even as you claim to know the Negro, you don't know him. You don't know what he's thinking. You don't know what's in his heart. You talk about civilization, culture, Christianity. You don't know the words.

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“As far as I can observe, the Negro is the only real Christian. Had he not Christ-like qualities his soul would have been so embittered long before this that the whole race would have been a group of mad anarchists. Suppose they were not real Christians? Suppose for one day they all should run amuck? What would happen? Just think, of your servants, your workers developing the craze for blood, for one single unit of twenty-four hours. What a holocaust. Let me just hint — poison in your coffee or other food; dynamite in your factories or under your homes.

“Bless your God that they are a spiritual, large hearted, forgiving, patient and loving people. You’re teaching the use of force by example, tantalizing by debauching their children, maddening by the bullet and torch, and driving to despair by your injustices, and feeding the fires of a volcano. Only deep spirituality, great Christianity and nobility of soul, in these people, prevents an eruption so violent that the whole world would be shaken.

“If religion means anything; if Christianity is more than a sham and cloak with you, let justice rule and righteous fairness prevail.”

“You talk like some new fool minister,” his neighbor sneered impatiently. “Seems to me you’ve learned a lot for being here so short a time,” commented another. “Oh, we know how to take care of all that. Keep ’em scared of you. Keep ’em scared of you,” asserted still another.

“You ought to be last persons to talk of Negroes being scared,” retored Dr. Tansey. “They didn’t scare in the

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Civil War and they didn't scare in the Spanish-American War, nor the World War. No, it's not fear that holds them in check. It's because they're living a life nearer true Christianity. Thank your stars for that. Thank your stars their leaders have them so well in hand.

"What the South ought to do: Instead of trying to keep a race down; a race on whose backs, by whose blood and sweat the South has lived and will continue to live; what the South ought to do is to strive to make better citizens out of these people. Of course, the South will never do that. The South is too bent on preserving its civilization, its caste superiority, its culture. The South owes it to the black race to give it citizenship, education, justice and right. You ought to have settlement houses, good schools, health centers and such things as are offered to the aliens from anarchistic Europe. You would thus be preserving civilization, by preserving your own safety."

"Well, you can't tell us what to do. You live miles away from the problem. We live in the midst of it."

"The problem is not a Negro problem but a white man problem. A problem to get right with God; a problem to quit making a sham of religion; a problem of changing your own attitude to one of justice, fairness and righteousness. Get right with your God and be right with your fellow man. I know this is preachy but someone has to preach it. Your ministers won't. Even our ministers in the North won't. The whole system of Christianity has been destroyed, or almost destroyed by your prejudice and misrepresentations. That's what the Negro thinks as

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he watches white America. Don't you think they are studying you and your professions of Christianity? — Don't be fooled. You are being weighed — America is being weighed, Christianity itself is being weighed. Every form of religion except one, the Catholic, has been spoiled. And mind you I'm not a Catholic. The bugaboo of prejudice is but a bugaboo after all and Christians ought to be above it.

"I can't," Dr. Tansey continued, "for the life of me see how it is that you people have been able to foist your beliefs and theories, and misrepresentations so thoroughly upon the rest of the world. My God, but the world is gullible, when you think of it.

"Here you people have maligned a race, distorted the truth about a race; and so painted a race as to make that race the most shunned in all the world when as a matter of fact all races are about on par. Race for race, none may be considered better than the other. It is our white civilization that has spread most of our evils. We've set the example. Every newspaper is full of criminal narrative, reports of injustices. It's a good thing our examples are imitated so little."

"We've got to, and you've got to protect our women from the brutes. You don't have that menace in the North so much as we have it down here. We're on the ground and know what we talk about," the first speaker defended while his companions nodded vigorous assent, indicating that he had scored heavily.

"That's another fallacy. — What about their women?"

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A southerner ought to be ashamed to mention that subject. Let's see, there are about twelve million black people in this country — that is, people with Negro blood in them. I think statistics will bear me out in the statement that more than four million of that number are of mixed blood. Now who mixed that blood? It was not the black man. You left your women behind with him when you went to battle in the Civil War. You found your women safe when you returned, even though you were fighting to keep him slave and serf. No, I tell you it is a white problem. I tell you, America — and particularly that part of America south of Mason and Dixon's line, ought to be ashamed of itself. It ought to be in so contrite a mood at the wrongs perpetrated on a harmless race that they should be working tooth and nail to right that wrong, rather than steeping themselves further in wrong.

“Think, gentlemen. Here was a race brought over by force, sold into bondage by force, subjected to all manners of brutalities, by force, its blood mixed because you were the masters, and instead of seeing your wrongs you gloat in your mastery and prate of civilization. Race inferiority and race superiority! What a mockery! Oh, what's the use? I'm going to bed.”

Every man on the veranda was on his feet as Dr. Tansey and Bennet who had remained quiet all this time arose. The anger in each man was growing.

“You say harsh things about a country in which you are a guest, Stranger.”

“Harsh but true, gentlemen,” Dr. Tansey waved his

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hand as he stood facing them. "Harsh but true. — Calm yourselves, gentlemen. Calm yourselves. We won't fight over it. At least I won't. You invited my opinion. I gave it."

"You evidently don't intend to stay long in this section," observed one.

"As long as I wish. There are good white men down here, who think and feel as I do. Many of them, who know the truths that you and I know. For the sake of peace they have allowed the cruel to triumph. But I tell you, gentlemen, some of these days this very class of which I speak will so arouse themselves over your depravities and brutalities, — that right and justice will triumph. Until that time let brutality have its sway. This is not the first time I've been in this section. I've long known of the brutalities and barbarities practiced down here in the name of civilization. Every day is filled with some tragedy and you know it. No one section is free. But, hell! what's the use? Come on, Bennet, let's go to bed. Good-night, gentlemen."

Dr. Tansey and Bennet strode past the group and into the lobby of the hotel to the elevator and to their room. Dr. Tansey fully expected to be set upon before he left the veranda and was surprised when not attacked. He was surprised at his own vehemence and outburst, as he considered it afterward.

CHAPTER XVIII

Bennet was just exclaiming, "My, Doctor, but you raved.—Talk about my holding my tongue"—when there was a tap at the door and to their invitation to enter the door opened and a benign white haired, dignified man in clergyman's attire stepped into the room. He held out a hand as he said:

"I don't know your name but I want to thank you for the talk you gave. It was courageous."

Dr. Tansey accepted the extended hand with: "Dr. Tansey's my name and this is my friend Mr. Bennet."

"Glad to know you, Doctor—and Mr. Bennet. My name is Buntin, Windsor Buntin—I've an Episcopal parish up country away.—I've been trying to make these people see the error of their ways but have had no success. They simply ignore my preaching and my church. You've no idea how bitter they are."

"Never mind that, Father, your work will show some day.—I should not have spoken so but couldn't help myself. I witnessed a sight today that coupled with others I've seen made by blood boil. I wonder the colored people don't rise up in rebellion. And yet they're a docile people, so spiritual that they prefer to have patience."

Father Buntin, turned to go then wheeled again, extending his hand, saying: "Your words have given me new courage; new hope. I shall work on. Thank you, good night." A strong grip gave mutual courage as the two

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men stood, hands clasped. After a moment the clergyman was gone.

Dr. Tansey and Bennet soon retired and it was not long thereafter before the heavy breathing of the former told Bennet that his companion was sound asleep. Bennet, however, lay awake a long time, thinking over the experiences of the day, and Lida. His mind was filled with her. After the conversations on the ship and his experiences and observations in Charleston he was ready to believe that she had been persuaded to give him up.

"And yet," he debated with himself, "she knew all these things before she promised." Her words at their last meeting sounded in his soul: "I love you, and always will." Despite all the doubts that assailed him, this expression with her image cheered till he slept with a smile about his face.

Dr. Tansey was the first to awaken in the morning and by the time he and Bennet had prepared for their trip the chauffeur, engaged the previous day, arrived with the car. It was a Packard and its well oiled engine purred musically, as the two fares piled in their luggage, preparatory to departure.

Just as the sun was burnishing the waves of the harbor and reddening Forts Moultrie and Sumter they started from the hotel and after skirting the suburbs, headed for the open country along the road to Augusta. As they sped along the flat countryside, great fields of cotton lay spread before them interspersed here and there with other fields of corn. Acres and acres of full blown cotton, in the

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period of blossoming, row after row running straight from the road for a mile or more till lost in one mass of green far down the field. In the distance the white, large cup-like blossoms, gradually turning to purple, made the field appear a sea of green and star blooms.

Interspersed with these, now and then, were fields of other products, such as wheat, millet, oats, and other growing farm vegetation. Corn fields with their yellowing tassels and ears just showing silken in the breezes. Through this beautiful country the automobile in which Dr. Tansey and Bennet were riding, bore the two men; here and there passing through dense wooded areas whose tall, long-leaf pines towered above the other growth like huge sentinels. At the edge of the road nestled among these wooded areas could be seen yards with low thatched houses, here and there children playing about, climbing trees or at other games.

At work in the cotton fields and among the corn were huge groups of Negro boys and girls, of varying shades, but mostly black or brown; black men and women, quaintly and picturesquely garbed, in costumes that to Bennet seemed slovenly and in many cases tattered. The men were behind plows, while the women and some of the children were swinging hoes, the other children seemed to be pulling weeds from among the cotton and corn. From the crest of an elevation as they rode, they paused to view the magnificent outlook. For miles and miles the vista was one of fields, patches of woods, and houses.

At one place along the road the automobile slowed down

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a short distance from where a group were resting, having come to the end of their rows. A few were laughing, but most of them were serious. Suddenly, as Dr. Tansey and Bennet watched them interestedly, there seemed to rise from the ground itself a rumbling, rounded harmony. Both men turned, mystified, from one side to the other, looking off in the distance wondering if the strains came from some home in which there was an organ. The chauffeur, who had been silent throughout the ride offered, as he tinkered with his engine, an explanation; "They're singing," he said, lifting his head in the direction of the grouped laborers.

The two men could not understand the words, which were pronounced with an accent, suggestive of a French patois and an English inflection; a characteristic of all speech in the vicinity of Charleston. The music, however, was marvelous. To Dr. Tansey it was like the prelude to an offertory played by some master musician on a great organ. The blending of the voices was such as to make the music seem like some weird pæan, each group of tones standing out just enough to make the drum of the ear quiver with the sound which brought delight to the hearers. Dr. Tansey and Bennet studied the singers, their eyes turning first from those producing the bass tones to those carrying the melody.

There was a haunting, semi-sad, plaintive shade to the song, with here and there the soprano of the women and the altos rising above the other voices while the lower tones seemed to moan their way from the diaphragms of

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the singers to their throats and out into the air. The song was one of the old slave melodies — a spiritual. The words, as Dr. Tansey afterward learned, were:

I want to be with Jesus,
For Christ has set me free;
I want to be with Jesus,
And sing for liberty.

There was such deep pathos in the song that for a few moments both men stood as if transfixed. To Dr. Tansey's heart there came a gripping pain of sympathy while his eyes filled with tears. He turned aside to brush them away, and when he turned back again Bennet was in the act of putting a handkerchief to his face. There seemed to be a wailing note in the song, as if they were crying out against conditions which hemmed them about, and against which they were helpless except for the faith which their singing instilled in them and the hopes that filled them of a better day to come.

The leader of the song had just stepped to another row of cotton and started toward the other end of the field still singing when a man, evidently the overseer, rode up from somewhere out of sight. The crowd was now moving along down the lanes of cotton when the man, a raw-boned, sandy-haired, fiery-eyed man, wearing a wide brimmed slouched hat, came into the group swinging a seven-foot four-braided whip with the end knotted.

"Here, you black devils. Get to work! Get to work!" With that he swung the whip viciously, the lash catching two of the women in its swish. One gave a groan and the

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other bit her lips in agony of pain and in an effort to repress the anguish she felt. The tall, lanky black who had led off with the singing and hoeing stopped and looked angrily at the man, gripping his hoe menacingly. He kept silent, however.

"None of your impudence, Obed, or I'll brain you," shouted the foreman. "Let me catch you all loafing again and I'll cowhide every durned one of you."

The Negro spoken to, lifted his head toward heaven as if in prayer, then turned to his hoeing.

The overseer turned to the men in the automobile.

"You have to drive them. They're so lazy. You have to keep at them and use force, too," he offered in explanation.

"You use force, all right" — commented Dr. Tansey drily. "I'd like to see if you'd not be a lot lazier if you had to swing a hoe in that sun on that hot field. I know I would."

"Oh, that's a nigger's job. Not a white man's."

"Suppose they decided to quit you. Who'd do the work."

"Nobody 'round here would hire my hands, 'less I said so. That's the rule. Besides I feed 'em. They've got to work for me."

"Don't you pay them in cash for their work?"

"Sometimes."

"How much?"

"Thirty-five cents a day."

"My God!" exclaimed Dr. Tansey. "Thirty-five cents

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a day to work in that field — from sunrise to dark. My God! and you call them lazy.”

“Well, who’s going to do the work? — Who’ll I get to work my farm?” The overseer exclaimed.

“And you drive them with a whip for that pay. I wonder they don’t all leave you.”

“If they did that I’d break their backs. Durn them,” returned the overseer.

“Well, we must be going. Good day,” was Dr. Tansey’s parting. With disgust in their hearts the two men resumed their journey. They had passed Branchville and were on the Orangeburg road going through a long stretch of pine woods, talking of commonplace things, Bennet’s mind still centered on Lida and their imminent meeting, when suddenly Dr. Tansey listened acutely, above the purr of the automobile. They had just passed a little copse at the rear of which sat a small house. Dr. Tansey listened again. Bennet, too, had heard.

“What was that?” he turned to Dr. Tansey.

“Stop, driver,” the latter ordered.

As the car came to a stop, off to the right of them from the woods a little way from the road came the most awful screams and groans. Both men leaped from the car and started for the spot.

“Watch out for snakes,” cautioned the chauffeur.

“They’re bad about here.”

Neither man paid heed to the warning, however, but rushed to where the groans and screams had sounded. In the midst of the thicket, lashed to a holly tree, with

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back bared to the waist was a brown skinned girl, crying and groaning, blood running down her back. At her side, with coat off and sleeves rolled up was a man with a ministerial vestee and collar on, swinging a lash.

"I'll teach you to steal," he puffed vehemently as he swung the lash again. At the swish of the whip a large welt stood up from the girl's back, from which blood began to flow anew.

Bennet was ahead of Dr. Tansey, this time, his eyes blazing. He was just in time to catch the lash as it descended for another stroke. He only caught part of it, however. His grip had been in the middle. The tapering end of the lash wound itself about Bennet's shoulder with just a tip touching his flesh, raising a lump and firing his soul with madness. He jerked the whip from the man's hand, the force of the pull throwing the lasher off his balance and toward Bennet. As the man fell toward him, Bennet's fist shot out and caught the man flush on the jaw. He went down.

"I've seen about all of this I can stand, you brute," he growled, his voice subdued with pent up emotion. "Stand up and take some of your own medicine."

The man began to grovel at his feet, his senses clearing enough to make him realize that if he stood he would be struck down again. Bennet stood over him, feet extended, poised for another blow.

"Don't hit me. Don't hit me," he begged. "I'm a minister. I just wanted to teach her a lesson — not to steal."

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"I didn't steal nothing. 'Fore God I didn't steal nothing," moaned the girl.

"Get up," commanded Bennet, "before I brain you. A big hulk of a man like you to be beating a woman. A minister — Pah!"

As they were talking, a rather pretty-faced white woman came toward them, holding her hand high displaying a purse. "George, I found it — I found it. Just where I put it on a shelf back of the clock on the mantel. I'm so glad I found it."

The girl was crying softly now, though her flesh was trembling as it bled. She was still tied to the tree. The minister's wife took in the scene and the two strangers, then turned, without a blush or a glance at the girl to the house.

"Free that girl," Bennet commanded.

The minister had now replaced his frock and busied himself untying the thongs that bound the girl. "I meant no harm. They all do it around here. I wanted to teach her not to steal. My wife had lost her purse," he offered as if in palliation.

"Shut up!" blazed Bennet as he stepped toward the minister, his fists clenched again. "You shame the name of minister. You — you — devil."

The girl, still crying with pain, threw her discarded clothing over her shoulder, covering her wounds, when freed, started off through the woods.

"If I had my gun here I'd kill you. White men don't interfere in one another's affairs with their servants 'round here."

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"Go get your gun. I'll wait here," commanded Bennet.

The minister departed, the girl following still crying under her breath. The two men watched him disappear and enter his house. They waited some minutes longer and when he failed to make good his threat they returned to their car and were on their way again.

"What a miserable country this is," commented Bennet, as they started.

"Yes, miserable, for some people. It's a beautiful land, though, were it not for such things as these and — snakes. And yet, Bennet, we don't know half. It fairly sickens me when I think of the crimes wantonly committed in this land."

CHAPTER XIX

Due to the roundabout way they had to travel, because of swamps and small streams over which there were no bridges, it was well along in the afternoon when they reached Orangeburg. They came into the city from the south, over a long bridge stretching across a swamp through which the waters flowed like a river. The Edisto River, however, was at the town edge of the swamp, a narrow dark stream, deep and mysterious, bending in and out on the border of the town. Across this the car rattled and sped along the highway into the center of the old city.

Stores lined the main street, that ran from the river clear across the town and into the adjoining country on the other side, after crossing the railroad track. On the river side of the town its boundary was fringed with small houses of the poorer residents, with a section adjoining in which the colored population lived. Most of the large stores were on Main Street in this section, having spread toward the river from the Court House and yard in the center of a small mall.

This mall and Court House were historic, having stood since Colonial days, the center of all life of the town and fenced in, by tall trees growing about it. At the rear, two churches raised their tall spires while in front was the imposing new post office building, the better class barber shops of the town, a couple of the main stores and the High School for white pupils. On the other sides were a

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drug store, and residences of some of the older families. Main Street divided itself at the mall so as to take in the square then rejoined itself on the further side.

Along the continuation of this street for about a mile toward the railroad were the wide residential estates of the older families, the Sallees, the Dibbles, the Felders, the Motts and the Harleys. Beautiful southern estates, well preserved, with their Colonial and slave day traditions seeming to show in the very austerity and dignity of the gate-posts and driveways.

There were a few stores conducted by Negroes on the opposite sides of the street, a large livery stable or two, two garages and other less pretentious residences. All other streets either paralleled this or crossed it at right angles. Across the railroad on the left was what had once been a park owned by Claflin University, a school for Negroes. This had been divided now into house lots and dwellings erected. At the rear of this were other old residences, and a farm belonging to the State College; while to the north and back from the section, opposite the low squat station was what remained of Claflin University with its campus. Opposite and beyond this stretching out into the country were farm lands owned by the two institutions, residences of other wealthy families, including the Andrewses and Websters, from carpet bag days.

Orangeburg boasted of but one hotel, situated near the Court House, it was here that all the county gathered to trade news and horses, or other products up for barter. To this the chauffeur drove Dr Tansey and Bennet.

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"Well, Boy," Dr. Tansey said as their luggage was carried in. "You're in the heart of the south now. Here's where I leave you for a time. You will continue on to the country for your girl and I'll hunt germs. Go cautiously. Keep your head, and your tongue, get your girl and get out. That's my advice. See and don't see."

Lida Lauriston was indignant at the manner in which Miss Gregory hurried her out of town, when commencement was over, and bundled her into a train headed for her southern home. She would have been still more indignant had the girl known the real cause for the hurry. From the staid old New England town, to New York, Lida's every thought was of Bennet and the desire she had to remain with him a little longer. The more she thought the more indignation burned at her heart. She planned and replanned the many things of which she would write him. When New York was reached she handed the porter a letter to be mailed. In this was her heart. She told of her sorrow at leaving him, her indignation against Miss Gregory, of the company of girls she had met on the train.

When Philadelphia was reached, with the change of scenery and the faces of the people, thoughts began to shift from scenes she was leaving to those of her home. She dreaded the meeting with her father and appreciated the storm that would rage about her head when she broke the news that she was to be married.

She counted on the great love her father had always shown for her to win her way through the ordeal. Through-

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out the remainder of the trip till the train pulled up to the station at Columbia, where she had asked him to meet her, her thoughts were centered on this encounter. For the first time in her life she somewhat dreaded meeting her father. Her heart was set, however, and whenever a young girl envelopes herself in the strength of true love she steels herself for any ordeal.

The train pulled into Columbia from across the yellow Santee River, past the penitentiary and on into the center of the city in the midst of a summer downpour. It was not a showery affair but a set rain with lowering clouds floating overhead in a southwesterly direction, making gloom for the surrounding scenery and filling everyone with a feeling of depression.

She spied her father before he did her, pacing up and down the platform in his tall spare dignity, erect and eager. He was looking through the coaches as he walked, but missed his daughter till she landed with her luggage which the porter set at the corner of the station while she ran along the platform. As she neared him she called out:

“Daddy!”

The southerner turned in his tracks and swept his daughter into his arms where she nestled crying softly. “Daddy, Daddy, Dear Daddy, it’s good to be with you again.”

Colonel Lauriston, stern old disciplinarian that he was, struggled to master his emotions, but despite himself and biting his gray moustache the tears flowed from his eyes. Only one who has loved an offspring with all the devotion

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of a parent can appreciate the pent up emotion that sought expression as the old man clasped his daughter to his heart. He seemed unwilling to ever release her.

At last he freed her, however, and held her at arm's length while the tears still flowed. For a moment or two they stood thus, the father's eyes caressingly roving over his daughter's form. Finally he spoke a little softly and wistfully, as if musing more to himself than speaking to her.

"The days have been long — so very long, child."

"Did you miss me as much as that, Daddy?" She threw her arms around him again in affectionate embrace. "I missed you also."

"Bless your heart," was all he could trust himself to say.

The station porter's move to lift the luggage and carry it away ended the touchingly domestic scene to which the passengers had been witnesses. Linked arm in arm father and daughter passed down the platform and around the corner to the awaiting carriage.

The drive out into the country to the ancestral home of the Lauristons for Lida was one of continued delight expressed in exclamations as she passed familiar sights along the way. For Colonel Lauriston the drive was perfect since he had his daughter at his side. He enjoyed sitting back in the carriage, listening to Lida's talk and studying the changes a year had made in her. As they rode the clouds broke and the sun shone as if to smile a welcome.

There had been decided changes in her. Her face had matured, taking on a more womanly expression; the cheeks

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seemed to be fuller and more delicately tinted; her lips a little more rounded and redder with the wine of life. Colonel Lauriston also noted a little more firmness about the well-chiseled rounded chin.

In the midst of one of her bursts of admiration she turned to him as she felt his scrutiny.

"Why, Daddy, have I changed so much that you are trying to get acquainted with me over again. Have I grown so much as that?"

He smiled as he said: "I do think I'll have to get acquainted again. You've changed and improved. Your year has done you good. You're now more than ever the image of your mother."

"I may have changed outwardly but inwardly I'm not changed. I'm still Lida," she exclaimed, raising his hand to her lips affectionately.

"I don't know about that. I have a suspicion that you must have met someone who's changed your heart just a little. And I fear my girl won't be with me long."

"No one can take your place, Daddy," she replied evasively.

"Oh, it's not that. I know I won't be with you always and I'd like to see you settled in a home of your own before I go. I'd sort of hoped you might find some nice young man up there. Did you, Lida?"

The girl's blushes betrayed her.

"There — there, I thought so," her father teased, noting her embarrassment. "Tell me about him. I might as well know first as last."

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"Oh, don't let's talk about that now. I'm not home yet, Daddy. — Wait till we get home."

"As serious as that, is it?" Colonel Lauriston remarked shrewdly.

His daughter made no comment, becoming suddenly pensive as she thought of Bennet and her mind raced back to him. Conversation for the remainder of the trip was spasmodic, Colonel Lauriston seemingly being content to have his daughter again under his eye and she absorbed in her dreams. In her reverie she retraced the events of the past year back to her leaving home. At this point she turned suddenly to her father.

"Oh, Daddy, what's become of Aunt Sally Gorton. Is she still here?"

"Yes, — still here." A spasm of pain at the reminder flitted across his face.

"That was awful, Daddy — the curse she placed on you, I mean."

"I thought you'd forget that superstition up North, My Girl. Only a superstition — only a superstition," he repeated.

"Yes, Daddy, but she whipped you. — Ugh!" she shivered. "I can feel the pain of it yet."

"The whim of an old woman, Lida. — The whim of an old woman," he repeated.

The carriage by this time had rounded a curve in the road disclosing to view a wide expanse of cotton fields, with here and there patches of woods. Set back at the edges of the woods at varying distances apart were houses

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of the foremen of the Lauriston plantation, the landed tenantry, and the squat dwellings of the Negro hands. In the midst of the grouping was the saw mill with its piles of sawdust and discarded slabs over which Lida had romped as a child.

Between adjoining fields of growing crops which seemed to be waving their welcome greeting, wound the white sanded road like a ribbon passing house after house till it came to the gate of the Lauriston mansion.

Nestling back in the woods, some distance from the road on the opposite side to the Lauriston lands, and two miles away behind the copse of woods around which the road had curved, was the less pretentious home of Old John Marley. Lida stood as these familiar scenes came into view.

"Hello, everybody," she shouted as she waved her hand joyously over the expanse that had opened up to view. "Hello, everybody." Tears of joy dimmed her eyes as she thought. — "Home again."

She rested her hand gently on her father's shoulder as the carriage gave a lurch but held her balance, looking through her tears over the landscape. Taking in here and there groups of laborers who halted in their work as they beheld the carriage and knew that the daughter of the house had returned. Lida gripped her handkerchief and waved it at first one group and then another. Hats and hands were waved in response. The carriage never halted till the horses came panting up to the wide piazza and rounded up to the hitching post.

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All the domestics of the household had swarmed to the door and onto the piazza as the carriage rolled up, from the aged bandana-decorated cook and ruler of the household Mammy Wing, to Malinda the table girl and Joe the chore boy. As the carriage halted, Mammy Wing, with her fat arms pushed the crowd aside, and started to meet the young girl. She had no more than made two steps, however, before Lida had mounted to the piazza and was swept into the old woman's embrace.

"Poor Honey Lamb," was all the old woman could say, tears halting further speech. While still in the embrace of the old woman, Lida was reaching out and shaking hands with everybody. Joe the chore boy was busy with the luggage, when Lida espied him and cried, "Hello, Joe, aren't you going to shake hands?"

The boy dropped his bundles and bowed, then shook the proffered hand. They were still grouped about the girl when Colonel Lauriston ordered:

"Be gone. Everybody. Get to your work."

With that all scattered, and Lida was ushered into the house. In the rural south formalities are forgotten. Thus when the news spread that Lida had returned, neighbors for miles around began to call. These calls continued till far into the night and Colonel Lauriston's heart filled to the bursting with pride as he exhibited his daughter to his admiring neighbors and extolled her accomplishments.

CHAPTER XX

It was far into the morning of the following day when Lida opened her eyes, following a sleep with pleasant dreams. As she awoke the sun was streaming into the room from high in the heavens. For a brief spell she surrendered herself to the luxury of being at home and in her own bed, sending her thoughts northward to Bennet. As she built her air castles of romance an intense longing to see her lover gripped her.

Picturing scene after scene in which the spirit of Bennet was present, she began to realize how difficult it would be to break the news of her engagement to her father. Long, long she argued with herself that her case was different, that Bennet was no different from anyone else except as his character and personality stood out above and beyond that of any other man she had ever met. She contrasted Bennet with the people of colored blood with whom she had come in contact during her life but could see nothing in him that was like them. He was as far removed from the plantation hand type of her father's lands and those of their neighbors as she was. After becoming hopelessly involved in speculations for a time she swept all these aside with the words:

"I don't care. I love him. He's all the world to me. Come what will my heart and life are his."

With that decision she arose, threw about her a dressing robe and wrote him a letter full of her heart.

"Dearest One:" — she wrote. "It is morning and I am

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at home. How good it seems to be again with those associations and friends who were yours from childhood. Everything seems the same. The people are just as hospitable, just as homey, just as loving. Life is sweet to me. Sweeter to me since I know I have the love of the best man in the world and my love is his. Just think what a difference a year makes in one's experience. A year ago this time I was but a girl. Now I have seen some of the world, have known some bitternesses, much joy and now know what love is. It is so different from what I used to imagine.

I can now understand the love that Christ gave to the world. For you have awakened in me such a deep love that I reverence the world for it. My love for you seems to make me see the world in such a different light that I see good in everything. Even the twigs of white oak in the yard as they sway in the breeze seem to whisper of love. If my love for you can make the world seem as it does to me, how wonderful must be that love which God gives to humanity. I seem to ask nothing of the world but your love; seem to want nothing but to look up into the sky and to know without seeing the words written there that I have your love and as you love me so does the Great God.

I have not yet told Daddy of my love for you; that I have found the man of my heart. I shall do so today. I pray God to give me strength for the ordeal. I know it will be an ordeal but I shall be brave, Dear, for your sake — for the sake of our love. He perhaps won't see it

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as I do, but he loves me and loving me I hope to convince him. When I go to him I shall have your hand in mine, in thought, and that shall cheer me along.

Since knowing you I have learned how blind prejudice wrongs many. It is unChristian, unholy. It has spoiled the whole of Christian living in this land of ours. Oh, I have learned a lot since knowing you, Dear. Prejudice has made a mockery of religion. What a farce religion has come to be because of the spectre prejudice has built up among us. In what a poor light we of this land must stand before the eyes of the world! In what a poor light we must stand before the poor untutored colored people who are our servants. What an example we set for them!

I shall be different from this on, thanks to the love you have awakened in me and some day perhaps all this land will be different. Then right will triumph and justice prevail, as they do not now. I anticipate a storm when I give the news to Daddy. Pray for me and with me, Dear, that I may have strength and success.

Remember that wherever you go, wherever you are, night and day, my heart is with you, my hopes are in you. Living or dead I am yours and always will be.

Well, Dear, it is nearly noon and I must be dressing. Give me your heart's love always and I shall ask no more.

Trustingly yours,

L.

The letter finished Lida rang for her maid and after her bath was soon dressed. Her father was waiting on the veranda when she appeared.

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"Hello, Daddy," she greeted him effusively as she swept down on him, placing both arms about his neck as she kissed him. His arms clasped her long and tenderly as she sat on the arm of his wide rocker.

"Are you tired, after last night?" he asked, tenderly.

"Oh, no, Daddy. It was wonderful, wasn't it?"

"We're all glad to have you back with us," he said tenderly. "Even the blacks. They had a celebration themselves after you retired."

"It's good to be loved so well, isn't it, Daddy?"

"Yes, my child. Love of your friends, love of your neighbors and love of your servants, make life worth while. Now that you're back I suppose someone else will be claiming your love, Eh, Child?"

"I don't know, Daddy."

"I shall be a jealous and lonely old father, when that time comes."

"You won't need to be for whoever loves me must love you."

"Yes, but I may not love him, for he will be taking the jewel of an old man's heart."

"Sh-s-s-sh-sh." She warned, a finger on his lips. "Don't talk that way. Daddy will always be daddy to me."

"I'd like to see you well married and settled, Lida, before long. I'm getting old now. My days are few before I shall be called to join those now under the sycamore. I want to see you married and in a home of your own before I go. — There are several good boys about here, sons of good neighbors. It would be nice if you could find one of them satisfactory.

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"Who, for instance?"

"Well, there's Old John Marley's son, Little Joe." Lida remained silent as the Colonel named over the young men he had in mind. "There's George Danielson, James Ferdick, John Knott. All sons of good men. Young men who are steady and native."

"Well, I don't care for any of them. They're all too stodgy. Besides Little Joe may be like his father. Imagine me the wife of a couple of hundred pounds of grease. Just fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh, imagine it," she mimicked. At the picture conjured up by the mimicry both laughed.

"Well," continued her father, when their laughter ceased, "Old John and I have been neighbors for years and years and his place adjoins mine. He comes from good stock, too. I understand Little Joe thinks a heap of you, too."

"It won't do any good, Daddy. I don't want any of them."

Colonel Lauriston detected the wistful tone in Lida's voice. He studied his daughter shrewdly. She blushed under his scrutiny.

"Ah," he said as she averted her face. "You've found someone while at school. Eh, I thought that would happen. Well, he'll have to prove himself to me."

"Oh, he can do that," she championed in brave admission. "You won't like him though, and I'm sorry for that because I'm going to marry him."

"Whether I will it or not? Would you defy your father? The father who nursed you like a mother from a little tot

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to now; who's been all and all to you. No! Lida, child, you'll not do that."

"You'll have to give your consent, then. For I'm pledged to him and he to me."

"Who is he?"

"Will you consent if I tell you?" she bargained.

"I want to know first," he nodded negatively.

"His name is Truman Bennet."

"Bennet, Bennet — Bennet? One of the Abbeville Bennets?" he queried.

"Oh, no. He's not a southerner at all."

"Who is he then? I must know. — What does he look like? — What are his prospects in life? A father must know these things to know if it is safe to trust the life of his child with the man."

"Why not let me be the judge and trust to me?" argued Lida.

"You're but a child yet. Only a girl. I must protect you."

"Did you think that way when you and mother eloped?"

"That was different. We lived in adjoining counties."

"You married the girl you loved. She married the man she loved. I've often heard you say neither your parents nor hers were pleased."

"Your case is different," he parried.

"Yes, the case of every child is different from that of the parent. You won't like my choice. I know you won't. Yet I came all the way back here to tell you."

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"If he's manly and upright I'll like him, perhaps; if he treats you right and is worthy of you."

"He's more than manly and upright. He is one man in a thousand, Daddy, and I'd go to the ends of the earth with him and for him."

"Even forsaking me?" he queried.

"Even forsaking you. My love would not be true otherwise — and it is true — as true as life," she said solemnly — so solemnly that Colonel Lauriston was convinced and bowed his head. He remained with his head on his chest for several minutes while Lida stroked his hair tenderly as if to ward off the blow her next words would give.

"You won't like him, Daddy, and I'm sorry — so sorry."

"Why won't I like him? Why are you so sure?" He gripped her hand fiercely, not knowing what to anticipate.

Lida stood facing him. He also arose and towered in front of her, awaiting her answer, his eyes snapping and his nostrils dilating in excitement. In this crisis Lida did not flinch or wince. She looked straight into his eyes, the woman in her coming to the fore. There was tenderness in her eyes and face, yet determination. Colonel Lauriston was over matched in this. He slowly sank back into his chair, awaiting her answer.

"You won't like him," Lida pronounced the words slowly and with hesitation, "because — because he is not of my, not of our blood. He has colored blood in him."

For a moment Colonel Lauriston was stricken dumb with the shock of the news. His tongue seemed paralyzed.

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He looked up at his daughter, his face wildly distorted and agonized, the flesh sagging in wretched lines, as the import of the news came to him. His hands trembled as with palsy when they reached to grasp those of his daughter.

"You can't mean that, child. You're joking. — It's a poor joke, though, Lida — that's a ghastly joke."

"But, Daddy, it's no joke. I'm in earnest."

"I forbid it." The Colonel had mastered himself again. He had now risen from his chair, rage consuming him. "I forbid it," he shouted. "I'll disown you. — I'll kill you first. — It shan't be. My God! It shan't be."

In the face of this crisis Lida was calmness personified. She faced her father's rage and tempestuous outburst with surprising assurance. Colonel Lauriston in his tempest strode from one end of the veranda to the other. Muttering and cursing bitterly between threats.

"To think that a Lauriston should ever come to this. To bring this disgrace on my family — my name. It shall never be — how did you ever meet this man? — where did you first meet him? — though you be of my blood if you ever do such a thing I'll disinherit you — I'll cut you off — put you out. A villain to steal the heart of my innocent daughter. Oh, why did I ever send you away from me? Why didn't I keep you at my side and under my own eyes. Woe — woe is me. I'm truly cursed."

"But Daddy, it's no disgrace to love, if one loves truly."

"Shut up," he commanded in shouting tones. He had never before used such a tone to his daughter. She

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flinched under its volume and shrank away, resolution still written on her face.

“You talk of love.— You don’t know the meaning of the word. I’ll not let you throw yourself away.”

There was calm determination of a fixed purpose in the entire attitude of the girl and Colonel Lauriston realized that it was the family will pitted against his and that this will would not be broken. It was now a battle of will powers and Colonel Lauriston knew that no argument or persuasion would turn the girl from her purpose. Knowing this his rage began to mount again and as it mounted he began to rave in such violently blasphemous language that Lida was forced to close her ears. He cursed God, man, devil and all the universe in his desperation, in the impotency of his rage. After half an hour he seemed to have exhausted himself and the storm that wracked him was spent. Lida had made no attempt either to halt him or to leave for her room. For some minutes after Colonel Lauriston ceased to rave he still walked the veranda intermittently throwing back his head and shaking it much as an angry bull does when in a rage. Finally he turned and entered the house leaving the girl puzzled, alone on the veranda. As he left her, Lida sank into the chair he had vacated, bowing her head on her arms in prayer.

It is characteristic of great simple souls that when in distress they turn to prayer. It was so with Lida. Lacking the comforting council of a mother her only consolation was in prayer. Tears of sorrow trickled slowly between her closed lids. Her mind tried to frame a prayer

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of her own but the only words that came to her lips were those of the Lord's prayer. These she murmured with pathetic tenderness as a lonely feeling enveloped her. "Forgive us our trespasses," she murmured, "as we forgive those who trespass against us." As she continued to the end of the prayer her soul seemed to take cheer and her depression departed. As depression disappeared the vision of her lover filled her mind and long she remained in the chair, her head bowed thinking of Bennet and wondering where he was.

Finally she arose and went to her room determined to write telling Bennet of the storm she was facing. "I don't mind the storm, Dear, she wrote. I live for you and I know that the Good God above will bring our love to a happy ending. I am suffering so, Truman, Dear. Suffering for you," she continued pathetically. "Suffering for my father who has taken it so heavily. If he only knew you as I know you and as your friends know you! I fear he will be hard to win over. I don't know what will be the end, but this I know. I love you — love you — and always will.

"I see things so differently now. We are all of one blood. Particularly are you and I of one blood for you are more white than otherwise. I have learned that nationality matters not where character and culture and heart have sway. We are a benighted people down here. Blinded by the prejudice of years of slavery and selfishness; clinging to the tenacles of a past age and condition while all the rest of the world is moving along.

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"Well, Dear, I must close now. I hear my father still pacing the floor below and it is almost three o'clock. I shall try to sleep for I know tomorrow will be a hard day for me. I shall dream of you, however, and the time when we shall be together. I am so lonesome, Truman — lonesome for you. I would ask you to come to me so that we two could fight and master the situation together, I am so weak! But I know what a danger that would be for you and so I must bear it alone. I shall be brave for your sake, though, and our love shall carry us on."

She signed, sealed and closed the letter, then without calling for her maid, whom she had dismissed long ago, she prepared for bed. Daylight was streaking across the southern sky, however, before she was able to close her eyes. It was far toward mid-day when she awoke with a start, conscious even before she opened her eyes that someone was in her room. She slowly opened her eyes to look into the fiery orbs of her father. He had finished reading her letter of the night before. Her face flushed in anger at the intrusion and the discourtesy of the act of opening the letter, even though the act was performed by her father.

For several moments the two stood gazing at each other, the father's look being one of menace and threat, the girl's that of anger. Suddenly Colonel Lauriston's face became so distorted with rage that he seemed another man. He stepped to the bed. Lida did not flinch or avert her gaze, though believing, in his madness, he was about to do her harm. She was the first to speak.

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"Daddy," she said, "I would never have believed a Lauriston capable of the ungentlemanliness of opening another's letters. — Give me my letter."

Colonel Lauriston stared so wildly at the girl that she began to believe he was out of his mind.

"Give me my letter, Daddy, please."

"No!" he thundered with such vehemence that the vibration of his voice seemed to shake the wall. His face was now that of a demon. He leaned closer and closer to the girl. Her eyes never left his. He raised his hands while his eyes fixed themselves on the pale pink whiteness of her lace bound throat. His fingers moved spasmodically. Lida recalled his threat to kill.

"I've a mind to kill you — choke you to death — you — you — you — ungrateful child. I—I—I—will kill you."

He bent closer to the pillow on which Lida's head was resting. Suddenly just as he was about to lay hands on her a medallion of Lida's mother, revealed itself from beneath the enfolding lace, due to her heaving breast just as wild hands were about to clutch the throat of the girl.

Colonel Lauriston's madness turned to an expression of horror. With a cry as of great pain he snatched the medallion from about the girl's neck, snapping the ribbon that held it and strode from the room, crying, "Oh, God! that I should live to see this day." He bore the crumpled letter with him. "Oh, God, I'm mad — I'm mad! Cursed and mad!"

As the door closed behind him Lida leaped from the bed.

CHAPTER XXI

When Colonel Lauriston left Lida's room he went direct to his stable whence he dispatched a messenger to Old John Marley.

"Ride, boy," he commanded. "Ride like hell and tell Old John to come to me right away."

"Yes Suh," was the boy's response as he thrust his heels into the sides of his unsaddled mount. Old John was at home, sitting on his porch, fanning himself and puffing. The ride was a little better than two miles and both horse and boy were panting at the end of the trip.

"Mistah Lauriston done tole me to come and ast you to cum tuh him right away. Sump'n very 'portant's de mat-tah, Suh."

"It fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh must be important to send you on his favorite horse, gallivantin' across these sands at this time of day."

"Yes Suh — yes suh," was all the boy would say.

"All right. Go down to the barn and tell that lazy Sam to hitch up and bring my buggy here."

The boy lost no time executing the order and shortly Old John was easing his heft into the buggy.

"Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh — watch out, when I get in," he cautioned his man. "Don't let the durned thing tip over."

The servant bore down as best he could to balance the vehicle till Old John was comfortably spread over the seat. He released his grip and handed the reins to his employer then stood aside hat in hand. Colonel Lauriston's mes-

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senger was still at the stable giving his horse a rub down and a rest before starting. This horse was the boy's personal favorite and the animal seemed to respond to affection by rubbing his nose over the lad's back as the latter bent to his task. After the horse had rested sufficiently he too started on the return trip, much more slowly, however. When he passed the veranda, Colonel Lauriston and Old John were bent over, head to head. The Colonel was gesticulating wildly and talking forcefully, while Old John was all attention.

As Old John Marley listened to Colonel Lauriston quietly, the only evidence of any excitement in his flacidity was the ruddy flush showing in his face and the increasing rapidity of his breathing. From time to time he nodded his head in encouragement, or uttered a monosyllabic oath. At last Colonel Lauriston leaned back in his chair as if concluding his narrative. He had been detailing to his old friend and crony the story of his daughter and the situation he was called to face.

"To think that one of mine should have come to this," he exclaimed pathetically. "But, By God, she will not. — She will not. — She will not marry him. I'll see her dead first."

"I fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh tell you what, Park. The best plan is to marry her off to one of our boys right away. Let her fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh marry my boy — fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh Young John. You remember I've said that same thing for the past year."

"Yes, you did, John," Colonel Lauriston agreed.

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"You'll have to fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh keep good watch on her to see she don't up and run off on you. Girls in love are varmints.——I'll tell you.— Let Little Joe come and take care of her. She'll soon learn to like him and before long they can get married. He can guard her from running off, too."

"Oh, God, to think that it would come to this!" exclaimed Colonel Lauriston. "To think that I would have to set a watch over a child of mine to keep her from harming herself and bringing disgrace on all of us."

"It's fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh her own good, Park. Better fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh to guard her and marry her off to Little Joe than fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh have the other thing," stammered Old John Marley sententiously.

Colonel Lauriston looked long at the speaker, his disgust at the proposition causing him to writhe more and more inwardly. At last he spoke.

"John, I almost hate you." He stood and walked a short distance away then returned and continued, "but I guess I'll have to give in. Lida will balk."

"Fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh what do you fuh-fuh-tuh care? My John ain't a scarecrow."

"No. — Neither is a porpoise," Colonel Lauriston commented drily, looking at Old John's bulk. The latter merely gave a slight gesture with his hands.

"John needn't annoy her — and he won't. He'll just be around handy when she's out walking or riding."

Colonel Lauriston thought a moment then spoke. "John may not like the idea himself."

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"He'll like it well enough. He likes Lida now more than ever and will know how to manage it. Let the two run together a few days and you'll see."

"Very well," Colonel Lauriston agreed.

"He fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh wants to marry Lida and when I fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh tell him that she wants to fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh throw herself away on a nigger he'll be mad fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh enough to kill for her. You just fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh leave that to me."

Colonel Lauriston walked away from the man, his head bowed in silence. Old John lifted his three hundred weight from the creaking seat and waddled to his carriage and was soon driving away.

Left to herself, Lida continued in her room for the remainder of the day weeping for her lover to come to her aid. She refused all nourishment and comfort offered by her maid, Chloe. It was far into the night when she finally grew calm and her eyes closed in fitful slumber.

When she awoke the following day she was ill from worry and weeping. For a long time she lay tossing in bed, fever of anguish burning her soul. Through all her torture she revolved plans for escaping and returning to the North and Truman. She knew it was no longer possible to get a letter through, since she was convinced her father would take care that no mail left the house without his inspection.

While she was still puzzling over her predicament the maid entered the room with tea and toast. The aroma of the tea and the odor of the freshly made toast tempted her appetite.

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"Thank you, Chloe," she said gratefully. "You're very kind to me."

The girl walked over to where Lida lay, looked down at her and said, "Miss Lida, I'm sorry you're sick. I wish I could help you."

Lida reached over and touched the girl's hand. "Thank you, Chloe. I do need help but you can't give it. I must find a way out myself." She buried her face in her pillow for a few moments then looked up at the girl again.

"Were you ever in love, Chloe?" she asked.

The girl dropped her head as she answered, "Yessum, Miss Lida. An' I'm goin' to git married in de fall."

"Lucky girl," Lida exclaimed. "I'm in love but don't know I'll ever marry." At this she began to weep while the maid comforted her. "Don't you cry, Miss Lida. Yore man'll cum fuh you."

"Thank you, Chloe," was all Lida could say. "Better leave me now." At the suggestion the maid gave the things on the tray a touch then glided from the room. The spasm of weeping ended, Lida dried her eyes and again being warned that she was hungry by the odor of the tea, lifted herself to her elbow and sipped from the cup prepared for her. A few sips of tea and bites of toast revived her courage and she decided to dress, then go to her cave retreat, a place she had not visited since her departure for the north the year before; a retreat to which as a child she had carried in secret all her cares and worries.

With this in mind she was soon dressed and prepared

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for walking. She descended to the first floor expecting to meet her father and another storm but he was absent. Glad of the respite from further scenes she passed to the veranda and down the steps to the drive and started toward the road. She had just reached the gate and turned toward the woods a half mile away where her brook tossed its waters over the falls when she looked up to see young John Marley approaching, hat in hand.

"Howdy, Lida. — I s'pose I should call you Miss Lida but you've always been Lida to me."

The girl paused in the middle of the white sanded road, wonder in her eyes that she should be meeting anyone so suddenly at this time in the day, a sun bonnet swinging in her hand. She resented the tone in which she was addressed; she resented also his appearing at such an inopportune time.

"I thought you were working," was her comment.

"I thought I'd pay you a call," Marley explained.

"Without being asked?" Lida queried.

"Neighbors don't usually have to ask, about here do they?"

"If they call in the heat of the day. Besides, I'm in no mood for company today, Mr. Marley." Lida started to walk on.

"Mr. Marley now, is it?" he asked. "It used to be John and Lida. I wish it could be so still."

"The wish is not mutual. Besides if you'd respect a lady's wishes and want to know what those wishes are it is to be alone."

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"Sorry, can't oblige you. I want to talk to you and this is a good opportunity."

"We've nothing in common, Mr. Marley and a gentleman will not annoy a lady with his presence when his presence is undesired. I may as well be frank with you. — Yours is."

"Well, I'm here and I'm going to have my say. I've known you ever since a boy and always liked you. I like you more now and want to marry you. Lida, I want you for my wife."

"So this is a proposal, is it? Despite objections."

"Your father doesn't object."

"No, but I do — and I'm the principal. Besides, I don't love you and never will, never could for that matter. And another thing, I'm in love with someone else. Engaged to him."

"I know all about that. You'll never marry him. — Never have a chance. No use trying. — They won't let you off this place."

"Won't let me off? Who'll stop me?" she asked as she stamped her foot angrily.

"I won't for one," Marley stated. "I'm going to watch to see you don't."

"You call that the act of a gentleman — you call that the act of love, do you?"

"Yes, it's to save you from yourself."

"Oh, you're just offering yourself as a victim to save me from marrying the one I love!" she exclaimed indignantly.

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Before he could utter a word she swung her hand to his face with a resounding smack. "Take that, you insulting wretch." Marley clapped his hand to the reddening spot on his face and looked at the girl in blank surprise for a moment. In that instant Lida turned and started back for the house, realizing that to go to the cave which had been her secret place of comfort for years would be to disclose it.

As soon as Marley recovered he bounded to her side biting his lips to control his anger.

"You'll not marry me, eh — I insult you, eh? Well, you'll never marry anyone else much less your white nigger and if he comes down here we'll kill him — and you too." When Lida looked at him too indignant for words, he continued: "I know all about it. I've been told. I'll not let you out of my sight."

With her eyes blazing as with anger of an Amazon, Lida faced him and pointed down the road and across the fields to the Marley home. Neither said a word. Her lips were drawn across her teeth in such tensivity of emotion as to make them bloodlessly white. Marley could withstand the gaze no longer. He turned and walked away. Lida returned to the house and her room. She fervently wished for some way to escape.

Both she and her father seemed to avoid each other for the next few days, though at night she could hear Colonel Lauriston pacing the floor of his room or the veranda till far into the night. Each time she attempted to walk about the place she soon discovered that Marley was on hand

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making good his threat. She was in despair. Worry and gloom were fast sapping her strength. At times she believed she would go mad.

CHAPTER XXII

Orangeburg and all sections of Lexington County, by tradition, custom and every other habit-forming agency still clung to one rural institution. This was "Big Monday," the first Monday in every month. All matters were reckoned from this day. It was the day when bills were paid and contracts were renewed; when the farmers and planters went to town to sell their produce. It was also the day of horse trading.

(Sometimes night long journeys by those who lived distances away and whose means of travel were slow moving mules or oxen was the rule.) From all along the main roads leading into Orangeburg, however, according to the distances from the city, caravan after caravan, joined the procession *to arrive by* early morning. From every side road there streamed into the main artery teams of all descriptions city bound. Along the sides of the road as daylight approached, and the vicinity of the city was reached, could be seen various campers. Negroes and whites in their various groups, sometimes asleep, sometimes sitting by camp fires. The more wealthy of the farmers, who could afford faster vehicles, such as automobiles and fast stepping teams disdained to break their night's rest by such early starts. They all planned to be on hand during the day, however, and would never miss.

Stores made ready for a rushing business in all kinds of trade till late in the afternoon. Extra clerks were hired and counters were loaded with goods, of all descriptions.

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On this day the county Court House lost its staid solemnity as if conscious of the day, also its importance. About the wide open space which surrounded it were hitched the teams of the early arrivals when the sun greeted the city with its first red rays. Negro boys, whose fathers had allowed them to accompany the ménage on the trip, as well as hired hands of planters, busied themselves excitedly feeding their charges, the sleep of an hour or so before driven from their eyes with a dash of cold water from the pump in the court yard or after a hasty ablution in some stream on the way into town. Young white boys, likewise, who had come from the rural districts with their fathers also busied themselves with their teams and made ready for a day of jollity.

Among those who had driven in the previous night and were stopping at the Planters Hotel was Professor Armstrong, browned by the hot sun in which he had been living since departing from the North at the *end* of his college teaching career, *ended* so suddenly at the faculty meeting. Since arriving in the South he had disdained to stop in the hot close city but had gone to his plantation out on the Congaree River, leaving his town house in the charge of servants. Desiring companionship and knowing that the best of the country would be at the hotel he decided to stop there over night rather than at his house.

Having retired early the night before he was among the early risers. This Big Monday crowd always had a fascination for him, even when a boy and his father used to bring him to the city. He liked to circulate among the

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planters, discuss crop conditions and banter jokes. Despite his erudition and the fact that he had espoused the profession of teaching he was still at heart a southern planter, revelling in the ways of the planter, talking cotton and corn and wheat and "nigger farm hands."

It was anticipation of this enjoyment that Professor Armstrong awoke, looked out of his window upon the day, and was glad. He was happy to whistling when taking his bath, whistling softly, however, so as not to disturb other sleepers. His toilet ended he descended to the piazza which stretched before the front of the hotel, surveyed the rows of empty chairs and stepped across the street to the various groups of farmers.

By some he was known and greeted familiarly, by others he was unknown till he made some comment on the weather, their crops or their equipage. The southern planter never stands on ceremony. Everyone speaks to everyone else and when once conversation was begun all barriers between men were down, and Professor Armstrong was soon the center of a laughing, handshaking jolly group of farmers.

After an hour or more spent in making the rounds of the courthouse, Professor Armstrong realized it was breakfast time and turned to the hotel dining room. He entered the room and was about to seat himself when his glance was directed across the room to one of the side tables where the pose of a diner presented a certain familiarity to him. He gazed for a moment, then exclaimed, under his breath, "Dr. Tansey. Well, well!" With that

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he stepped briskly and hospitably across the table to where the visitor sat. Touching Dr. Tansey on the shoulder as he arrived at the table, Professor Armstrong reached out his hand hospitably, at the same time exclaiming, "Dr. Tansey, Hello — I'll be durned."

Dr. Tansey turned, quickly stood and grasped the outstretched hand enthusiastically.

"Professor Armstrong. This is indeed a delight. — I didn't know you were in town. — I thought you were miles away."

Professor Armstrong smiled gladly, still holding the hand offered him. "I see, you're white. You've forgotten the way we parted."

"Forgotten? — Oh — Yes, forgotten, Oh — yes — forgotten? Oh, — I remember" slapping Professor Armstrong heartily on the shoulder. "Why shouldn't I forget? Ha-ha-ha." Both men laughed boyishly as Dr. Tansey continued. "You had an awful peeve on that day after the faculty meeting. An awful peeve over nothing. I hope you've learned to see things rightly now. — Don't suppose you have, though?"

"Can't say I have. Come over to my table."

"No, thank you. Join me here. I'd enjoy it so much. I've started my meal and you're just about to order — Join me."

"I will."

At the indication of Dr. Tansey, a waiter drew a chair and seated Professor Armstrong. The latter reverted back to the faculty meeting.

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"I still can't see why white men should fight over 'niggers.' We fought over them once. I don't think they're worth bothering with to that extent any more."

"Same old Armstrong," exclaimed Dr. Tansey. "Dear fellow it's not a question of fighting over them. It's fighting for the right. And we'll always fight for the right till the right triumphs. And right will never triumph until every man, woman and child in America, regardless of race, color or creed or circumstance has a fair and a square deal. The American conscience will never let the question lie still. Might does not make right any more than two and one make five. It is this instinct of America that makes her great. The desire for and the determination to be right. America will never be right till the wrong of color prejudice is eradicated and all men get justice."

"Why bother with them. I can't see. They're a burden to the country. They're lazy and worthless, unreliable and shiftless."

"Who made them so, if all is as you say. Where's the blame? You know, as you make the statements, however, that they are false — as false as fool's gold. Where would your wealth be if you did not have them to work your fields? If you did not have them to cheat? How long can you or would you work in the hot sun of this land to till your fields. — About two hours. You call them shiftless yet they're amassing much property despite handicaps faced by no other group. I see lots of evidences of it right around me here. You call them unreliable, they were reliable enough to take care of your lands and

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families when your fathers went to war to keep them in slavery. — No, Armstrong, your statements are all false and misleading. These people are a vast asset to the South and some day the South will realize it. Perhaps too late.

“If the South could only see it,” Dr. Tansey continued, “if you could only see it you would try to make the best citizens possible out of them; encourage them to become better citizens, make their living conditions better, their health conditions better and their moral conditions better.”

“Moral conditions. Ha-ha-ha. That’s a joke. They have no morals.”

“Tut-tut-tut. The shoe’s on the other foot. And suppose they had no morals, who has set them the example for centuries?”

“The southern white man is the most moral on this hemisphere. He is the preserver of civilization — of Anglo-Saxon purity of race.”

“Don’t talk rashness, Armstrong. Don’t talk rashness. The very complexion of your town belies you. The complexion of every southern town or city belies that statement. Don’t talk balderdash.”

“We protect the purity of our women,” boasted Professor Armstrong.

“Yes, at the expense of the purity of another race. That is not preserving race purity. The purity of your women needs no protection, it is the purity of southern manhood that needs protection and the purity of black

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women. When out of twelve million black persons in this land more than a third of them are of mixed blood, the white southern man ought to hang his head in shame. You've not an argument to support you and the best thing to do is to set about righting the wrongs done, then conscience will be free. First set your own house in order and all things will be added."

"You're talking a lot of theories," Professor Armstrong gestured. "We, down here, are faced with the practical workings out of life. If you want to see real conditions, you have the best chance in the world today. Today is court day. Come with me. Court will just be sitting when we will have finished."

"I'll be delighted. I have often wanted to get into the midst of this question."

"All right, you'll see."

Professor Armstrong was right. By the time they finished breakfast and prepared themselves for the street, those having business with the arm of South Carolina law, as administered in Orangeburg, were just assembling. A steady stream of persons were passing through the courtyard gates and assembling in the building. Armstrong and Dr. Tansey joined them. Once in the building they continued with the crowd seeking the municipal criminal session, held in an old-fashioned high vaulted room, unchanged since the structure was first built. In fact the courthouse looked back on a very respectable antiquity of slave trading.

Almost all the seats in the already stifling, stuffy court

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were taken. Over in the corner near the "pen" Professor Armstrong sighted two vacant seats and worked his way to them, aided by one of the sheriffs.

The day was sultry, with a stagnant, drowsy, sleepy air pervading the room despite the fact that the windows were wide open. Men and women of all colors and in various stages of undress, some exuding the odor of sweaty clothes, some of tobacco smoke, filled the place. The negroes huddled into one corner, some of them, torn straw hats in their hands, trousers suspended by one string, some barefoot and others with dilapidated shoes on, while here and there in the crowd was a rather better dressed, man or woman, mulatto or black, all puffing, fanning and panting with the excitement. Dr. Tansey noted in a corner near the judge's desk a block platform and above it shackles, reminding him of the auction block of slavery days.

About them bustled a colored court runner or a lawyer looking after a client. The better class colored person was defended by some white lawyer friend, the smaller cases being attended to by men of their own race. Dr. Tansey and Armstrong had just time enough to take in the scene when a tall lanky sheriff, arose, pounded his desk and droned, "The Co'te." All who were seated stood.

Justice was speedy. Invariably, in the minor cases where whites, mostly young men, involved in brawls and small offenses, they were reprimanded, warned and freed. When all these except one or two were disposed of, the

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cases of the Negroes were called. Most of these were more trivial than the others, being accusations of loitering, vagrancy, petty larceny and brawling. Invariably sentences of differing lengths to the chain gang were meted out to them. Appeals were useless. Usually after a woe-begone look, a hopeless pleading with eyes for sympathy and leniency they were mercilessly sent to the chain gang, from where they were paroled to the various farms. Thus Dr. Tansey surmised, were the farm hands recruited.

Invariably they were allowed but a few words when asked to plead guilty or not.

"Boss, Yer Honoh," they would start, "I didn't do nothing. —"

"Thirty days in the gang," would be the interruption of the judge.

The court room was almost cleared of cases. In the rear of the restricted side of the room, huddled into a small group were four colored persons, one a young girl, who was weeping silently, two elderly persons, a man and a woman, and a young brown skinned youth, tall and rugged, manly and clean looking. In fact the group was in decided contrast to the prisoners making up court cases, disposition of which the two men had witnessed. At intervals the old woman would lean tenderly over the weeping girl to comfort her. The man sat grimly watching the judge, his face muscles as taut as graven images, his arms folded across his breast, a veritable Ethiopian sphinx.

The judge, a rather florid, puffing, medium sized per-

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son, wearing heavy spectacles and a scowl, eyed the group from time to time while disposing of the remaining cases. As they neared conclusion he seemed to become fidgety, seeing the two white men sitting after most of the spectators had departed. The face of Professor Armstrong was familiar but the judge was puzzled over his companion.

Professor Armstrong was waiting till court was over to introduce Dr. Tansey. The judge looked at the two men, hesitated, cleared his throat, still hesitated, then gave an order to the bailiff. This official stepped into an ante-room then returned immediately with a young white man about the same build as the young man with the girl. As this man stepped up to the bar, the judge's face cleared of its scowl and a smile played about the lips.

He looked the young man over peering at him over the rims of his glasses as he said:

"Jim Trafford, you're sowing wild oats, are you?"

The young man bowed his head and stirred sheepishly. "You are charged with assault on this girl. — Don't say you're not guilty. — I'll just fine you two dollars. — Don't get caught the next time."

He was about to hand the papers over to the clerk for the payment of the fine and the disposition of the case. The young Negro man with the girl uttered a groan, the girl herself began to cry loudly and the old woman with her to moan as she rocked back and forth. The old man's arms were still folded across his breast. He was biting his lips as the tears flowed down his cheeks. The moment was tense but the next was tense to the nerve breaking point.

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The judge was about to rise from his chair when from the rear of the room a woman's voice rang out. "Just a minute, Your Honor." The judge sat erect with a snap as if jerked up by some rope. Dr. Tansey and Professor Armstrong turned quickly to note the speaker. The young woman, for such it was, was advancing toward the bar, her eyes blazing, her finger pointing menacingly at the judge. Several bailiffs started for her as if to protect the judge.

"Your Honor," she said, "do I understand that you are letting this man off with a fine on a charge of this kind. A crime against a woman of my race would be called rape. Is not this rape, also? I was in the adjoining room when this girl was attacked. I heard the threats he made and the struggle when he forced her to his will. I demand he be prosecuted as any other criminal.

"This is a court — supposedly a court of justice," she continued. "If there ever was an injustice — if there ever was a travesty — if there ever was a farce it is the way this case is disposed of."

"Are you an attorney?"

"No, I'm not. Would to God I were. I'm human, though, and I come from a section where human beings are treated like human beings and brutes like brutes regardless of color."

"Are you interested in this case?"

"Yes, I'm interested, and I'll see it through."

"Your name, please."

"Louise Comstock."

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"Well, Louise, you say you're from a different neck of the woods. I presume from the North. — Well, here's a bit of advice. Go back North to your mother's kitchen and don't go meddling in affairs that don't concern you. Court's dismissed."

With that the judge gathered his books and papers and stepped from the bench toward his room. The girl's face was flushed to the color of a blush rose with confusion and indignation at the treatment accorded her. She stood, a blaze of anger, watching the judge retire, fierce imprecations in her soul.

"You shame the name of womanhood!" was all she could venture to say. Dr. Tansey was just stepping toward her to calm her anger and advise her that her indignation was carrying her too far, when Professor Armstrong noted the girl who had been wronged.

"My God," he exclaimed. "Ione Felding!" Then he turned to Dr. Tansey. "Doctor, that's the daughter of my laundry woman. Judge — Judge—" he started for the door through which the judge had departed. "Judge," he shouted, "come back here." Then thinking of the young white man who had perpetrated the outrage, he turned to look for him. "Where's the young dog," he said. "Where's the young dog?"

Louise Comstock went over to the group of colored people. She took the girl's hand. "Never mind," she comforted, though realizing how lame and hollow the words must sound in the girl's ears. "Never mind, I'll take you away from this land where you'll have protec-

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tion." The girl was weeping freely now on her mother's shoulder. The father's tongue seemed to be freed and he was pronouncing bitter curses against the land. The scene was so distressing that Dr. Tansey felt an ungovernable desire to get away from it. Grabbing Professor Armstrong by the hand he almost pulled him to the door.

"Come on," he urged, "Let's get out of here!"

They were just in time to see the young man Trafford stepping from the gate at the end of the short walk to the sidewalk. He was smiling brightly at the successful termination of his episode. He had just reached the sidewalk, however, when there stepped from behind one of the teams hitched near, the young colored man who had been comforting the girl in the court room. Trafford looked up into the eyes of the young man with a triumphant smile and started to pass on. The young colored man stepped up to him, however, and without a word of warning struck Trafford a blow that sent him reeling against the picket fence, dazed for an instant by the surprise of the attack.

The assailant started after him again to continue the assault when a dozen men, who had been in a group nearby rushed to Trafford's aid. The young colored man saw them coming, however, and met the first to reach him with a blow that sent the rescuer also tottering away. Before the attack could be carried further, two police officers rushed in, fighting their way through the now gathering crowd and placed the colored man under arrest, rushing him through the yard of the courthouse, into the building

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and then into the nearby jail, by means of an underground passage by which prisoners were led back and forth to the court room.

By this time hundreds had gathered at the scene, curious, inquiring, wondering. Hotel corridors were emptied, stores lost their clerks and customers alike, and even some of the proprietors forsook their businesses to crowd over to the vicinity of the brief battle and arrest. In a few minutes the crowd had been augmented into hundreds.

Trafford was in the midst of them nursing a fast swelling jaw and accepting sympathy.

"What's the matter? — What's the matter?" was the question on every tongue of those who were too far on the outskirts of the crowd to know what had caused the excitement.

"Nigger assaulted a white man," answered one man to his neighbor. "They're too damned fresh. Did they kill him?" was the next question.

"No, got away — arrested," the first man spoken to answered.

"They're too durned fresh," commented another bystander. — "Gawd only knows what we're coming to. Getting so there's no living for them. They all ought to be run out of town."

"Who's the man assaulted?"

"Trafford — Jim Trafford."

"Aw — Buck Trafford's son?"

"Yes."

"Huh — Guess the boy must have been meddling 'round

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the nigger's girl. He's always doing that. Lot of the young hellions are doing that — sewing their wild oats. Guess we've all done it more or less. Pooh! That's nothin'. As long as there's a good looking nigger girl about there'll be white boys hunting for them. It's fair game too."

Such was the drift of the conversation heard by Armstrong and Dr. Tansey as they stood a little aside from the crowd studying the group.

"By God, I'll see that that thing stops," swore Professor Armstrong. "Tansey, I know that girl and her whole family. Good people too — law abiding, and bringing their children up right and according to law. Her mother's been my laundry woman and the laundry woman of my family for years. — Poor, of course, and simple — but law abiding and honest."

Dr. Tansey was tempted to say, "This is some of your southern justice and right," but remained silent.

The two men were still within the yard of the courthouse when a squad of police arrived and dispersed the crowd. There was some show of resistance for a brief time, here and there being heard mutterings of anger against the Negro, but soon the street was tranquil and the ordinary business of Big Monday resumed. Dr. Tansey and Armstrong walked across the street to the piazza of their hotel. As they neared the door they heard a group of men just leaving a store inquire of two standing at the edge of the curbing:

"What was the trouble over there?" indicating the spot

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across the street where the crowd had gathered.

"Don't know, exactly. Somebody said a nigger insulted a white woman."

"What d'you know about that!" exclaimed the first speaker. "Times are getting awful — Time to call a halt. They ought to be run out of town — Did they get the nigger?"

"Yes, he's in jail."

"Good time for a necktie party, eh — teach them a lesson."

"Hanging's too good for them. They're worthless, no good and a burden anyway. Thanks — See you later." The group separated.

CHAPTER XXIII

Dr. Tansey and Professor Armstrong had just seated themselves when they noticed, coming from the courthouse, Louise Comstock.

"I've seen that young woman somewhere but can't place her," said Dr. Tansey.

"Yes, I recognize her too — I've met her somewhere — I don't know where."

Louise inclined her head slightly as she passed them, remembering that they were in the courthouse when she made her plea. As she bowed, both men raised their hats and Dr. Tansey approached.

"Pardon me. I seem to have met you somewhere but can't say where. It was good of you to defend that poor creature today."

Louise extended her hand. "I know you. You're Dr. Tansey — at the college — and this is Professor Armstrong. I also know you. I've seen you many times while I was at Miss Gregory's school. Being but a school girl, you paid no attention to me."

"Oh, you're one of Miss Gregory's girls, are you? I was quite sure I knew you. — You're a long way from home, though, I may say. — You're not a southern girl," Professor Armstrong observed.

"My people are from the south originally but I was born North and have lived there all my life. I came South to study conditions a little this summer and was preparing to visit a friend of mine, Miss Lida Lauriston."

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Both men looked at each other but said nothing. For the time they had forgotten the existence of Lida or Bennet.

"I think I'll cut my visit very short and leave for the North tonight. I'm sick of the place. It's hot — stifling hot, and the people are so different. Conditions are so different. I'm going to protect that girl — take her with me."

"You should not allow yourself to become bothered by such things, Miss Comstock," suggested Professor Armstrong. "They're ordinary and common down here. In fact, so common that we take them as a matter of course and turn our minds to more serious things. I wouldn't let that bother me."

"Well, it does," she asserted. "I've changed my mind on a lot of things since I came South. I know a lot I never knew till now and I'm disgusted. That was a horrid thing for that man to do. — And to think the judge let him off with a fine after almost condoning the offense."

"It's a common occurrence," offered Professor Armstrong. "I admit, though, that this case comes pretty near home to me. I know the girl and her family."

"And you permit such a thing. I'm both ashamed and surprised. Where's the white womanhood of the South that it tolerates such things. I heard the whole sordid affair. I was in an adjoining room when the girl came to gather laundry for her mother.

"You should have heard her pleading with that brute." Miss Comstock's eyes filled with tears. "It was enough to

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melt a heart of stone. He threatened her with setting the mob on her for assaulting him; threatened to have her father hung and finally used force. I didn't realize what was happening till he had gone and left the girl crying. I went to her and found her in a pitiable heap. It was I who insisted on arrest. But what good did it do? They lynch colored men for far less than that."

Both men hung their heads in silence as she passed into the hotel and to her room, her eyes still filled and overflowing with tears. The street had entirely regained its serenity now and the sun was high in the heavens. Dr. Tansey was the first to break silence.

"Let's have luncheon," he said. Professor Armstrong was agreeable and the two men passed into the dining room. Following the meal each passed to his room for a nap, as is the custom in the South during the heated portion of the summer days, at least for those who have the leisure. It was late in the afternoon when Professor Armstrong, freshened from his sleep and a bath, knocked on Dr. Tansey's door.

"Awake, Doctor?" he asked.

"Yes, come in," the Doctor invited.

"Hope you're rested."

"Feeling fine."

"Doctor," began Professor Armstrong. "I've been thinking over things since I left you and believe I'm beginning to see them differently. This affair of Ione Felding's this morning came pretty close home to me. Man, I've known that family ever since I could toddle. Her

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older sister, who's married is just about my age. — Ione is younger."

"She certainly was a pathetic bit of humanity, there in the court room this morning."

"Yes, she was, and the way those eyes of hers appealed to me in their dumb brown helplessness when she saw me! I tell you, Man, I'll never forget them. Trafford didn't get half what he deserved from that fellow."

"What can you do about it now?"

"There's nothing to be done about it now. But I'm beginning to believe that conditions that permit such things with such ease are not right."

"Keep on. That's Old Man Conscience working on you. Follow him and he'll set you right too."

"No, I think it's the personal interest I have in the girl."

"Old Man Conscience, just the same," Dr. Tansey shook his head sadly. "He won't let you rest nor will he let the American people rest till right is right and justice and fairness obtain for all. — Now you can understand why men battle for right. Once get Old Man Conscience to work and give him any sort of free play then any question is safely solved."

The sun was now hanging far over in the western sky and evening approaching. From the window of the room in which the two men sat could be seen the tall cold angular stone and masonry jail, across the other house tops, with its iron-barred windows standing out in bold relief, cutting a vivid outline in the otherwise crimsoning

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sky. Dr. Tansey looked from the window to the jail. The eyes of Professor Armstrong followed his.

"And to think," continued the latter, "That poor fellow cooped up somewhere in there for trying to protect his own."

"Keep on, keep on, Conscience — you're gaining," thought Dr. Tansey, though he made no comment.

Before he could frame any satisfactory comment a bell-boy rapped on the door and reached in with the afternoon papers. Dr. Tansey took one in a casual manner, offering another to Professor Armstrong.

"What an infernal lie!" exclaimed Dr. Tansey. "What a hellish, fiendish lie!"

Professor Armstrong looked from his paper to the face of the Doctor, waiting for explanation. Dr. Tansey held the paper he was reading toward his friend.

"Look at that. — Look at that!"

Professor Armstrong glanced at the publication held before him. In glaring head lines letters fully six inches deep, fairly screamed the words:

"WHITE GIRL ASSAULTED

Negro under arrest

Riot narrowly averted on Main Street

Shortly before noon by arrest of man charged with Crime

Threats of lynching followed

White Populace in angry mood may seize jail at Sundown, Talk, burn prisoner and entire Negro section heard."

Then followed a harrowing story purporting to tell of the assault. Dr. Tansey began reading the narrative indignantly.

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“One of the most brutal and dastardly assaults ever committed occurred shortly before noon today when a burly Negro assaulted a white girl on Main Street. The assault was witnessed by hundreds of people on the street at the time and was considered the most daring outrage of the kind in the history of the city.

“The girl, according to bystanders, was walking along the street when the burly brute, much the worse for drink, sauntered up to her and insolently demanded that she accompany him. Upon her indignant refusal, the Negro is said to have seized her forcibly and when she resisted with all her might, is said to have struck her a stunning blow in the face. She screamed and a dozen white men rushed to her aid. The Negro leaped nimbly over the courthouse fence and was making good his escape when two police officers captured him.

“The crowd following sought to lay their hands on the brute but the officers managed to enter the courthouse and take the brute to jail by way of the underground passageway by which prisoners are brought to court. For a time rioting was imminent and several innocent Negroes were attacked in revenge. A squad of police soon arrived, however, and dispersed the crowd.

“Since noontime, however, all Orangeburg citizens have been aroused and plans are being made to demand the prisoner from the authorities. There are also muttered threats that the entire Negro section will be wiped out tonight. The police are to double their guard about the jail since they have been warned of what is being planned.

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They claim to have the situation well in hand. All Negroes are warned to keep within doors and to be meek, and are warned not to be caught on the street with firearms. Effort is being made to disarm all suspicious blacks."

"Now, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Dr. Tansy. "Of all outrages! There's a case of inciting to riot, if ever there was one. And they call that journalism. Telling a damnable lie, then feeding the fires of hatred and outlining mob action. All for the sake of selling more papers. The presses ought to be torn down. — America, when will you be right?"

Professor Armstrong was studying the story and picturing what might follow.

"Yes," he admitted. That's certainly sowing the dragon's teeth, all right — sowing them with a vengeance too. Newspapers are great teachers but they are also to blame for much of the wrong in this country. They certainly shape mob psychology."

"Anything's likely to happen now," exclaimed Dr. Tansy. "But to think how unjust is the story. How utterly reversed are the facts. — And who has sought to get facts? Not even the newspaper. Armstrong, I don't see how your colored population endures down here. I don't see why they don't all pack up and leave you flat."

"Oh, they know they have friends down here," was Professor Armstrong's reply. "There are some white men down here still who stand for right and will fight for it in defense of their blacks. The better class whites don't

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read a paper like this and they don't approve of the wrongs done to black people. They'll arise and assert themselves sometime. Give them time.—Give them time."

"Meanwhile all manner of hell's to pay, eh? If there starts a riot tonight where will your better class whites be? Safe in their homes. If a Negro is caught armed, he'll be shot down. White rioters will be given every freedom for sway of their bestiality, however. They will be able to shoot down Negroes with impunity."

"Oh, don't be so hard on us, Old Man. We're not all bad."

"That's true, Armstrong. Pardon me. I forgot. Let's go down to the piazza. Perhaps I exaggerate."

Suiting action to words the two men descended. The piazza was crowded. Twilight was fast coming on, and here and there a star began twinkling in the red gold sky. Along the streets preparations were being made to light lamps, while Negro workers, were hurrying to their homes, anxious, worried looks on their faces, fear in their hearts. They had been warned by the police and were eagerly heeding the warning. There was an ominous silence enveloping the city. Hotel guests as well as others seemed to sense it. Few words were being spoken and these in undertones from neighbor to neighbor. Everyone was restless, the very air was depressing and mysteriously heavy.

CHAPTER XXIV

Along the street, as darkness closed in, a light flashed here and there from post to post. In the square, about the courthouse the electric lights sputtered and *spiff*, flickering intermittently till the carbons had adjusted themselves, as the current was turned on, until finally the entire square was a brilliant blaze. Now a lone horseman passed galloping down the main thoroughfare, sitting stiffly in the saddle, his hat down low over his forehead. Shortly he was seen to return accompanied by another horseman. Two police officers in uniform passed along the front of the hotel swinging their night sticks, also silently. The sun had now gone and the stars were out, the milky way showing almost so brightly with its sprays of stars, as to seem to cast a shadow along the street.

Now groups of silent figures were seen walking past the hotel. Most of them went in the same direction. Again there passed several more horsemen, all silent. Singly and in pairs some of the guests at the hotel who were sitting on the piazza arose and either entered the hotel or sauntered down the street in the direction the other walking groups had taken.

Dr. Tansey turned to Professor Armstrong. "Professor, there's something mysterious in the air. I feel it."

"So do I — something uncanny. I don't like it. It's almost ghostly. Ever hear southern ghost stories?"

"No."

"Well, they tell many a one about here. — Make your

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hair stand on end, some of them. — Stories of old Civil War days, or pre-slavery days. The blacks used to tell them to me and I tell you they made me feel creepy. That's just the way this night is making me feel."

Suddenly from down the street in the direction in which the crowd had gone there rang out on the night air a shot. All the air was quiet for a second except for the echo of the shot reverberating across the night sky. Those remaining on the piazza keyed their senses to the situation, listening expectantly. Two more shots in succession and then a fusilade greeted them. At that Professor Armstrong leaped to his feet:

"My God!" he whispered. "A lynching."

Dr. Tansey also leaped up, still listening. The minds of both men were filled with events of the morning. "This must not be. That man is innocent, Armstrong. Innocent," he exclaimed, catching the purport of Professor Armstrong's words and realizing the truth of them. "We must stop them before it is too late. Come, Armstrong."

"Hold on a minute," warned Armstrong. "We'd better not get mixed into this thing."

"Get mixed into it. Man, you know the truth. All this comes from that paper's story."

"Yes, but you don't know the temper of a southern mob."

"Where're your best men now? They ought to be heading this thing off. Get a few of them from somewhere. Do something! Do something! Come on!"

"Wait a minute. If you must go, better be armed. You

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can't tell what'll happen," cautioned Professor Armstrong. "Have you a revolver?" Reaching into his rear pocket Professor Armstrong drew from its holster a blue steeled six-shooter. "Here, take this. I'll get one from my room. Wait for me."

"Hurry then, we may be too late as it is."

Professor Armstrong was gone but a matter of seconds but it seemed like ages to Dr. Tansey. They were the only persons remaining on the piazza now. While waiting for Professor Armstrong's return, Dr. Tansey's mind travelled over miles of distances and there flashed before his memory many scenes through which he had lived, reviewing them with a vividness never before known to him. They all traced in succession to the present time, ending with the picture of this man being strung up to a tree, his life sacrificed to the mob spirit, an innocent victim of their fury. Though impatient for Professor Armstrong to join him there was no trace of excitement in his system, every act, every thought, every motion of muscle was impressively deliberate.

"Hurry!" he urged as Professor Armstrong returned.

Down the street they started following the direction in which the crowd had gone. They had but reached River Street when they ran headlong into a mass of seething, rushing, scrambling humanity. Where had all these people come from so silently and in such numbers. There were young men, old men, middle aged men, women, girls and boys in the crowd which was now for the first time showing signs of boisterousness. To Dr. Tansey the

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picture was like that of some seething cauldron boiling and bubbling, with masses of substance being churned to the surface then disappearing, reappearing and again disappearing. Dr. Tansey strained his eyes to see if he could detect the man with the prisoner. He could not.

“To the courthouse! To the courthouse!” was the advice being passed from mouth to mouth as the crowd surged on. Far back in the midst of the crowd could be seen two horsemen seemingly bearing a burden between them.

“We’ll set them a lesson. Teach them their places. Show them who’s master here.” These and other words were uttered from time to time as the crowd surged on. Dr. Tansey gripped tightly the arm of Professor Armstrong lest the two become separated in the crowd, and were half swept along with the van of the mass to the courthouse. At the gate, the few who seemed to be directing the mob, paused, two on each side. Dr. Tansey and his companion stepped into the yard, not caring to be in the midst of the mob when action really started.

“Make way! Make way!” the two leaders urged motioning for opening of a path between the mass of humanity through which the prisoner could be brought into the yard. From one of these Dr. Tansey and Armstrong heard the story of the capture of the prisoner. The jailer made some resistance but a few shots fired over the prison brought him to terms and the keys were surrendered. There had been no trouble.

“Isn’t a jailer sworn to protect his prisoner?” asked Dr. Tansey.

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The man addressed turned a long look of surprised inquiry at Dr. Tansey. After a long scrutiny he asked: "Protect a nigger prisoner? Who ever heard of such a thing."

Before any reply could be made the two men walking the prisoner between them came down the human aisle. The boy's eyes were wide and staring with fright. One white man on each side grasped an arm firmly. The boy looked pleadingly from one face to another as he passed. There was no pity there. They spat at him instead. Some kicked at him front and rear. Some tried to strike him. As the leaders made a circle about him under a tall elm with wide overhanging branches, Dr. Tansey heard the boy say, in prayer, "Oh, God. You know I'm innocent. Save me."

Dr. Tansey was jostled away before he could hear more. He had satisfied himself, however, that this was the same youth he had seen in the courthouse in the morning. To confirm his conclusion he turned to Professor Armstrong, "That's the same young man?" he asked. Professor Armstrong replied in the affirmative by nodding his head. Before more could be said a sea of twisted, leering, white faces closed in about the group. Exultant, blood-hungry yells, menacing and terrible rang in the prisoner's ears. Fiery eyes now glared at him, shrill, raucous voices cursed him and hands seeming like long bony talons seemed to reach for his throat.

"Get a rope. — Get a torch. — Get a light'ood knot," were directions shouted. Dr. Tansey could stand no more.

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He mounted the steps of the courthouse near which he stood, looked over the madly yelling crowd which was fast getting from under control of the leaders.

"Men," he shouted. For a moment his voice attracted them and there was a hush. He seized the advantage. "That man is innocent," he shouted.

"The devil he is. We know. The papers told the story. We know." They shouted him down. He tried again. "That man is innocent," he shouted at the top of his lungs. They paid no heed to him.

"Lynch him. Lynch him," shouted a hundred voices. "Burn him. Burn him like the dog he is," shouted others. The crowd had now become one struggling, seething mass. Men with ropes had arrived. Insanity reigned. Into the very midst of the raging group sprang Dr. Tansey, revolver drawn. Professor Armstrong, now having concluded to help the youth followed the Doctor. They fought their way to the side of the youth. A dozen hands were reaching for the rope which was now about the young man's neck, eager to swing him into eternity. Four hands grabbed it.

"Don't touch that rope," commanded Dr. Tansey, his eyes blazing, his revolver drawn. The action was so sudden and surprising the four men drew back for a second. Other hands, however, grabbed the rope. Recovering from their surprise the four men rained blows on Dr. Tansey, under which he was falling when he suddenly clutched the trigger of his revolver. As he shot, the body of the boy was pulled high into the air. A hundred shots

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rang out and the body was riddled with bullets, by those without the inner circle.

While they were shooting the body full of bullets, four men were beating Dr. Tansey to the ground. Professor Armstrong grabbed the falling man and pushed the crowd back. The mob was blood-mad by now and cared not whom it seized. Professor Armstrong was now fighting to save his friend, forgetting the riddled body swinging back and forth from the limb of the tree, neck broken and life gone. He was just in time to drag the sinking body of Dr. Tansey to safety when he heard a screeching and screaming on the outskirts of the crowd.

Professor Armstrong paused in the act of laying the body of Dr. Tansey on the ground to see what the new commotion was about. As he raised himself, an unearthly weird and mournful screech greeted his ears.

"Save me! Save me!" screamed a woman's voice. It was Mailie Felding, elder sister of Ione, who, nearing childbirth, could not rest at home, feeling that some awesome thing was happening. Following the crowd from the jail at some distance, she paused transfixed with fright and terror at the courtyard to witness the lynching and had been discovered by some of the mob.

"Here's another nigger," they shouted. "Lynch her. Lynch the minx, before she gives birth to another brute," they shouted noting her condition.

Professor Armstrong saw the wild look on the girl's face but recognized who she was. "By God, they'll never do that monstrous thing," he murmured.

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"Save me. Somebody save me. I ain't done nothin'. Help! Save me!" she screamed.

"I'm coming, Mailie," Professor Armstrong answered as he plunged fighting now like a demon, into the mob. He was shooting as he came. Man after man fell. He paused not to see whether they were dead or only wounded. His revolver, however, was soon emptied. He struggled on using the weapon as a club. He reached the girl but before he could lay a hand on her she swooned away and he was knocked unconscious.

Up her body was jerked with a snap that broke the spinal cord with a loud noise. Those who had been fighting Professor Armstrong, now madly called for a rope for him. He was still unconscious from the blow when a rope was pulled about his neck and about to be thrown over a limb also. In that moment, however, one of the leaders cuffed the men who were pulling the rope. "That's a white man. Durn you. Don't you see." He swung his fists right and left, at the same time repeating, "That's a white man. That's a white man." His blows and his words finally penetrated into the brains of the attackers and they allowed the rope to be pulled down from the limb of the tree. The man who rescued Professor Armstrong carried him along up the courthouse steps and into the corridor of the building. There he left the unconscious form and again joined the mob which had by now lost all semblance of sense. They were trampling all over the spot, pushing, jostling and fighting. As they swayed, a hundred feet passed over the body of Dr. Tansey,

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where he lay unconscious on the ground, crushing the remaining life out of his body.

"Burn the niggers out. Burn the niggers out. Kill them all," shouted the mob as they ran cheering and screaming from the courtyard. Across the city toward the Negro section they headed. By some unknown circumstances all the lights in the district were extinguished. Toward the section came the mad mob, now hundreds strong. As the outskirts of the district was reached and some of the smaller dwellings, mere shacks and shanties, were being torched the police seemed to have now awakened to the situation. The sheriff, when overpowered and his keys taken, immediately called for the Mayor. This man was away. He then telegraphed to Columbia, the state capital, for aid. The Governor had ordered the nearest troops to the scene. The police were battling half heartedly with the mob and frightened Negroes were running here and there for shelter from their burning homes. As they ran those in front of the mob, by the light of the burning building were shooting at them. Luckily no one was hit.

Suddenly from one of the shacks there burst a small mountain of flame, shooting high into the air and close to the front fringe of the mob. "Gasolene!" shouted someone, in warning. The word passed along. "Gasolene." This had the effect of awing the crowd and before they could recover the police seized the opportunity and drove them back still further. This explosion seemed to sober the crowd and it was not long before the police had persuaded them to retire.

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This gasoline storage was the first barrier reared by the Negroes to protect their property. A little further in, where the better class dwellings were located a number of them, heavily armed had gathered, determined to sell their souls and their property at as great a cost to the attackers as possible. A race war impended. Luckily the inspiration of the gasoline warning had sufficed to sober the crowd and they were slowly dispersed.

Back in the courthouse Professor Armstrong awoke to consciousness to find a death-like stillness pervading. He was puzzled. He felt at his side a cold wall. He tried to think where he was, finally recalling the mob and its struggle. From his proximity to the wall he thought he must be in some vault, because of his lameness, left for dead. He felt above him but could touch nothing. He reached to his other side and touched only empty space. Finally he raised himself to his hands and knees then decided to follow the wall to its end. He brought up against a blank wall as he went forward. He decided to try the other direction. As he turned his hand came into contact with a rope. He dropped it with a shiver. After crawling some distance he detected a streak of light. Coming to this he felt about and discovered a door. Raising himself to a standing position he touched a knob, turned it and opened the door. The glare of the street light dazzled him for a moment. He blinked then stepped out.

A cold shiver ran up and down his spine as he looked down and saw the rope, stretching from his body to the floor, a noose end about his neck. He suddenly remem-

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bered all then. "My God, what a narrow escape!" he exclaimed. "Great God! And to think that this is America — that this is the South." He cast his eyes to the left but turned them quickly away sickened at the view. The two bodies, that of the boy and his sister, still swung from the elm limb. He closed his eyes, his knees sagging. He recovered himself, shortly. Then thought:

"Where's Dr. Tansey." With the question he recalled with vividness the fighting and the fact that he had borne the stunned body of the Doctor to the side of the courthouse. He turned his face in that direction then fainted dead away. Dr. Tansey's body lay stretched out, the clothing a mass of rags and tatters. All life crushed out, flesh and clothing enmeshed in gore, with the trampling of many feet — an horrible sight.

The view overwhelmed — sickened him. The horrible truth of the gruesome tragedy enveloped him and he was unable to stand. He slowly sank to a sitting position on the steps, his head cupped in his hands. He was too dazed and misery-stricken to think for a time. All he could see was the wretchedly mangled body of what was once his friend. A great pain gnawed with slow agony at his heart. He wanted to weep but tears would not come; just this deadly hurtful pain in his breast and the horrible pictures of the past few hours burning themselves into his consciousness.

For many minutes he sat mute, no sign of activity about him save the slight rustling of the leaves in the trees. He dared not look up, for even at the suggestion of the lift of

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his head, there flashed before his mind the swaying lifeless bodies of two innocent blacks. Without seeing them he knew they were there — and one was a woman; a woman who had grown up with him and though of another color, in their childhood days had been friend and playmate.

“Oh, God,” he groaned, his head still in his hands. “I’ll go mad — mad — mad. Take the sight from me. Take them away.” His answer was creaking ropes or swaying limbs. With the plea his hand swayed in the general direction of the bodies though his eyes were still closed. At the motion of his hand something rubbed against his knee and across the back of the hand which still held his chin. He opened his eyes only to close them with a shudder. The rope by which he also had nearly been snatched before his Maker was still about his neck. He shuddered and trembled like the leaves above him. His brain was in a fever. An unearthly stillness pervaded the courtyard and the entire square.

He lost complete idea of time and knew not how long he sat in that position till the bell in the tall steeple of the white church at the head of the square boomed out the midnight hour. The slow ponderous strokes added to the weirdness of the situation. Professor Armstrong staggered to his feet, opened his eyes then quickly covered them again as if to shut out the sight but the impression was so indelibly burned on his mind that even with eyes shut the cadaverously stretched bodies and their ghastly

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swaying were as vivid to him as if the bright sun of daylight was shining upon them.

After a few minutes' struggle he mastered his nerves and again opened his eyes. He started down the steps, the rope pulling behind him. Frantically, fear in his heart, he gripped and snatched it from about his neck and hurled it from him where it fell on the dew-wet grass. He staggered down the steps and started for his hotel. The exertion was too much for him, darkness came to his widely staring eyes and oblivion into his mind. The last conscious moment he recalled afterward was an impression he had of falling over a steep precipice — falling — falling — falling!

CHAPTER XXV

It was long after daybreak when the police relaxed their vigilance in guarding the Negro district. There were still smouldering flames in the small area which had been burned. Despite the fact that all seemed quiet and as if nothing had occurred, those of the colored population who usually were astir before this hour and on their way to their places of work refused to leave their homes.

In the downtown section, not a Negro could be seen and the whites began to awake to the awfulness of the situation. Like a bad conscience on the morning after there was feeling of remorse in some. Most of those who had taken part in the mob, however, and their friends began to visit the scene of their diabolical outbreak. There was no remorse in them, however. They were prompted by sheer curiosity. The newspapers carried stories of the night's work but not the whole story. There was no mention of Dr. Tansey or Professor Armstrong. The parts they played came out later.

For the most part the crowd gathered on the sidewalk, leaned against the railing and gazed at the swaying bodies and the two lying on the grass — the one that of Dr. Tansey, the other that of Professor Armstrong. They believed that all four bodies must have been those of Negroes.

"I thought we lynched only two niggers," remarked one to a bystander.

"So did I. There are four bodies, though."

"I only remember two," said a third.

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One spirit, bolder than the others, now that the sun was shining, started for the gate. "I want a piece of that rope for a remembrance. I'll show it to the next one of them that gets fresh with me."

"So do I. — So do I. — Me too," various others repeated as they followed the leader into the yard preparing to cut ends from the dangling ropes. They had each secured a piece of the rope and started for the gate again when, as they were passing the body of Professor Armstrong, the latter regained consciousness, opened his eyes, turned over and started to rise. With a yell of fear the four souvenir hunters tossed their bits of rope into the air and ran.

Professor Armstrong staggered to his feet, looked wildly at the retreating four as they broke through the crowd, then cursed them.

"Cowards — brutes that you are. Run, you curs who call yourselves men — white men at that. Behold your work, and but for Providence I might have been one of them, pointing to the general direction of the three bodies. You don't know what you've done. Killed three innocent persons, one of them white, just to please your greed for blood.

"Behold your work, you beasts. You've killed a white man. — A real man — as well as two absolutely innocent human beings. God will curse this town for this as He will curse this whole land unless you change."

With that he strode toward the gate. The crowd, in awe, stood aside to allow a path through which he walked.

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Professor Armstrong crossed the street, haggard and hollow-eyed from his experiences, and made for his hotel.

"There's a white man's body over there in that yard," he said to the clerk at the desk, pointing to the courthouse. "A white man killed by that mob last night. Get the body to some undertaking place."

Orangeburg awoke in a remorseful mood. When the better families, whose domestics had been frightened into hiding during the night while the rioting was at its height, failed to show up for work the first realization of what had happened came to them. When their morning paper recounted the wild happenings of the night before and the barbarity of the scenes they came to a greater realization. When, however, an extra edition was cried into their faces, announcing that one white man had been accidentally killed by the mob, his body trampled on and mangled, the horror of the affair sank into their souls.

It was well toward noon before the bodies were cut down and removed from the courtyard. Not until after Judge Gauvin had come to hold court and viewed the remains. When he stood at the gate, about to enter, with the crowd of morbid spectators gaping at the still swaying bodies, he realized that the man and woman were innocent also that he knew in his heart where the guilt lay, he hung his head, after ordering the bodies removed.

His self control was so shaken by the gruesomeness of the sight that he had recourse to his closet for stimulant, which he always kept on hand. The body of Dr. Tansey had been borne away early in the morning, soon after

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Professor Armstrong had notified the clerk. All day, however, there was a continual crowd passing and re-passing the spot, souvenir hunting, or just morbidly curious. The bodies of the Negroes were turned over to relatives who prepared them for burial. As if in remorse, some of the white families sympathetically offered the stricken ones aid in their bereavement. But for the remainder of the city business proceeded as if nothing unusual had occurred. Trafford was hurried out of town by his family when it became noised about that he had been the indirect cause of the tragedy.

Rev. Father Winsor Buntin in his little country parish, as he read the story recalled the meeting with Dr. Tansey in Charleston. His heart was heavy. He bowed his head in meditation sitting in front of the little mission that had been his home as well as the center of his work.

As he pictured the scene, he murmured, tears filling his eyes: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. How can men be so cruel," he thought. "So brutal! I must hurry into town. He was a stranger in a strange land. I'll pray for the repose of his soul."

Arriving at Orangeburg, Father Buntin hurried to the hotel and from there learned of the plans for the funeral. Learning from Professor Armstrong that the body was to be shipped North after a few simple exercises, he requested that he be allowed to conduct the services.

"Gladly, Father. I was wondering whom I could get to conduct the services."

Professor Armstrong's legs were still shaky from his ex-

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periences and the shock of them. His hair had turned white almost over night. His eyes were haggard and hollow.

"I don't know whether I can stand the shock of the services yet or not, Father. I am still weak."

"Yes, I know. — I'm glad you were spared, my son. I hope this will soon stop and the country get back to normal."

Louise Comstock passed them by, heavily veiled. She had not been able to get away from the town with the girl she was protecting before the tragedy swooped down on them. As she passed them, Professor Armstrong stepped to her and touched her lightly on the arm.

"I have a clergyman who will conduct the services, Miss Comstock."

"I'm so glad — so glad!"

She bowed as Professor Armstrong nodded in the direction of the clergyman. "What a terrible affair! What a cruel land!" She began to weep as she spoke. Professor Armstrong and Father Buntin consoled and comforted her.

"As soon as plans can be made after the funeral, I shall take the girl and the body North. I have wired his people," she said when she had recovered. "I also notified them of the accidental death and stated that the body was coming home. What a horror!"

Louise's eyes again began to fill. She hastily passed inside the hotel. Professor Armstrong returned to the clergyman. The following day the little chapel in which

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the funeral of Dr. Tansey took place was crowded. Remorse was now truly gnawing at the heart of Orangeburg and there came to the chapel men and women who would never otherwise have given such an event a thought.

There was no music for the ceremony. Light from the sun stole through the crevices between the shutters which darkened the room. Fr. Buntin was just about to begin the funeral services when from the yard adjoining the chapel there sounded in the ears of the audience the voice of a Negro domestic singing one of the Spirituals. Every heart seemed to cease beating. No one scarcely breathed. The voice was melodic, tender, and minor in tone, as if sensing that death was in the room and tragedy in the heart. The words seemed to glide from the lips as the rich sweet-toned soprano voice sang:

*Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.
Steal away — Oh, steal away home,
For I have not long to stay here.
My Lord calls me. He calls me by the thunder.
The trumpet sounds it in my soul —
I have not long to stay here.
Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.
Steal away — Oh, steal away home,
For I have not long to stay here.*

Instinctively as the voice died away into silence every head in the audience drooped to the breast. Not an eye but filled with tears and not a heart but swelled with pain of sorrow and grief.

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“Let us pray,” said Father Buntin. “Oh, God,” he said, “In the midst of life we are in death, as thou knowest. In the midst of darkness we are in light; in the midst of the false we are in truth. Teach us by this death to know life; to know light and to know truth. Men blinded by passion, ignorance and filled with hatred are incapable of seeing thy light, thy life and thy truth. Forgive those at whose hands one of thine own image has been sent to thy bar. May they learn to regret their actions and turn from those ways by which they have broken thy commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Teach them thy way, which is the right way, Oh, God. Teach them that men are men, created by you, endowed with thy spirit and that since they gave no life they must not be guilty of taking life. Grant this, Oh God, and lead us into better ways where we may always stand for thy glory till life is everlasting. Amen.”

As the prayer ended again there stole through the latticed windows the lone voice singing:

*Swing low sweet chariot, coming to carry me home.
Swing low sweet chariot, coming to carry me home.
I look over yonder what do I see,
Coming to carry me home,
A band of angels coming after me,
Coming to carry me home.
Swing low sweet chariot, coming to carry me home;
Swing low sweet chariot, coming to carry me home.*

As the song ended, Father Buntin arose and stepped to

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the head of the coffin. "My friends," he said. "This is a very sad task. Sadder than most of us realize. To be taken off in the prime of life before completing the things we have set out to do, is unfortunate. Far more unfortunate, however, is it to be sent to an untimely death as this man has been sent.

"His was a noble heart. — A heart well placed — a Godly heart. I had the opportunity of knowing him a few short weeks ago under circumstances that stamped him as one of God's few in these days of moral cowards. Had he lived he would have been a power for good. Perhaps, however, his death may serve the end for which God intended his life. This death and that of two other beings killed by mob fury ought to serve to point the way toward which we are fast heading unless we call a halt. Anarchy and ruin are just over the fence.

"I warn you, one and all. Let this death be a lesson to you. You have long been playing with a torch and it is a wonder that you have not set the entire country on fire from it. Once started there is no telling where it will end. Think, friends, members of this parish as well as members of the whole South. I wish my voice could carry into every hamlet in this wide land. The Ku Klux is raging and lawlessness reigns rampant. This is the most lawless country in the world with more than eight thousand homicides in every year, recorded. God knows how many are unrecorded.

"Think, men and women. Think. Thought is law and law is thought in control. When we think we cease to be

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beasts. And all are forced to admit that we have been **beasts.** Think what an example of brute force we set for those about us. We have the law in our hands. We have the constabulary, the courts and all the machinery of civilization in our hands. What is there to fear that we must always resort to force? We are supreme. Cannot we set the example by Christian living, by Christian law and Christlike judgments. What can we expect but brute force from a lowly people when we are the greatest, most inhuman, brutes of all.

“We ruin their women at will. We flog and kill them at will. Picture the scene a few days ago when a poor wretch, who has now been proven to be innocent was strung up and disemboweled by a mob gone insane as the mob went insane that slew the victim lying before us. Think of human beings, members of a civilized race clamoring and fighting with one another, men, women and children, for strands of rope by which poor innocent souls have gone to death at our hands. Who is the brute, I ask? Who is the brute? What must be the feelings of those of their race who look on from behind walls of fear and trembling and see a supposedly civilized Christian people become such beasts.

“Until our civilization turns back to God and realizes that there is no expediency, no honor, no excuse in or for racial hatred, injustice and the rule of might, we shall never have a real civilization and we shall still be living example to all the remainder of the world, of hypocrisy, farce and sophistry. We are all hiding behind a color

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cloud. Behind a theory, that might makes right, and justice — is what we choose to make it!

“Come out, Oh, America! Come out, Oh Land of the South! In any great human cause some blood must be shed to impress the people with the seriousness and the righteousness of the cause. Therefore the death of this honorable, noble man, if it serve the proper purpose will awaken us to a greater consciousness of the evil we have reared in our midst; to quicken our consciences to the dangers that surround us; this death has come to show us the will of God, to point the way to better living for us all.

“We owe these people a duty we have never thought of paying. We owe ourselves a protection from the menace of anarchy and ruin. Far better it would have been if, after the war of secession we had turned our efforts to making them into good citizens rather than to have tried so hard to enslave them again. We have never done right by them and it is not to their discredit that they have come so far and done so well under the circumstances. Rather has it been to the great discredit of the South that we have sought to keep a people virtual slaves when the God of the Universe had ordained it otherwise. We have not played the game fairly. It is time that we should.

“How much better it would be if we had set ourselves to the task of educating this people into the ways of civilization; if we had started and kept going, schools for their education, settlement houses for turning them into better citizens, and teaching them the laws of health and clean

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living. We have cast aside, because of a blind prejudice, a vastly potential force that if directed properly would have made this, our South blossom as a garden of paradise.

“It is time we turned about in our ways. It is time we considered these matters in relation to our own existence. We have been possessed of a blinding madness. If by the death of this noble man we are taught to see the light, and our conscience can be awakened, then I say, God be praised. Amen!”

CHAPTER XXVI

Bennet was full of curiosity as to the old town as he looked about on his arrival at Orangeburg with Dr. Tansy, but was also impatient to arrive at his destination. There seemed to be some urgent appeal forcing him on. With this urge on him he secured an automobile and started for the country. Just out of Orangeburg, on the road north, after he had gone not more than a few miles, he came to a swollen stream, called Long Branch, flowing rapidly toward the Edisto.

There was a long foot bridge over this and there had been a temporary bridge for automobiles. For most of the traffic that crossed it, however, there was no bridge; horses, mules and vehicles were forced to wade through. Most southern streams, no matter how small, run through wide swampy areas. Sometimes these streams are shallow at their deepest, while for half mile on each side water may be flowing in the same direction, making a very wide stream but very shallow and clear.

Long Branch was such a stream. On either side of the main channel for a half mile or more, through patches of swamp growth bamboo, and palmetto, there raced over the sand and mud the waters of this stream. In dry seasons the stream narrowed to the main channel, and automobiles could be driven across. At every freshet, however, the stream became swollen and impassable save for horses or high wheeled vehicles.

Bennet's chauffeur, coming to this stream and seeing its

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swollen, rushing width, drove along till the water was almost awash with the hubs then reversed his levers and started for the shallows again.

"Where're you going?" asked Bennet showing impatience.

"Can't go through there, Mister."

"Why you were almost half through then, I could see the other bank."

"Yes, but that was just where the stream was deepest. It would have been over the motor before long."

"Too bad. — Can't we hurry?"

"Have to go 'roun, State Road way."

"How far?"

"'Bout ten miles."

Bennet groaned inwardly but sank back into his seat. The machine purred its way along the State Road, when once that was reached, and Bennet was content to watch the panorama as field after field of crops passed in one long kaleidoscopic view. This road took Bennet far over by way of Fort Motte, over the long, red, clay hills and winding roads between muddy fields of staple cotton and swaying corn. Here and there was a group of huddled dwellings about which little black, brown and yellow children played, while their elders were to be seen in the fields, hoeing the cotton or ploughing corn. Beyond Fort Motte the roads became sandy and slow for motor vehicles.

It was late in the afternoon when the chauffeur turned in his seat to say:

"We're 'most there now. 'Tain't far now to Colonel

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Lauriston's lands. He's a mighty big planter. — One of the biggest in Hebron County."

"Oh, you know him, then?"

"Yas Suh. I know him, by sight. Comes to town regular. I got some friends working for him too. He owns mighty nigh all the land hereabouts. What he don't own, the Marleys do. Them two families run things too. The Witts are another big family. But they live a little to the no'th. — Work a lot of colored hands. Work 'em hard too."

"This seems to be pretty good country. There's so much land. It ought to be good for your people too. Do they own any land?"

"Own land. Lord, they don't own their souls. Can't own anything. They get such low pay, and have such a hard time paying up their debts from one year to the other that that's all they can do. Work, eat, live and die. Eat, work, live and die. That's all they do. When we git tired o' that we try the city but that's hard too.

"Why can't you plant enough land to make a surplus from year to year and thus get something ahead?"

"You can do that some places but you can't in this county nor in Truro County. — That's the next county west to this. That's a bad, bad county. Why I know a colored family that lived on a white man's place and couldn't make a living — was in debt all the time. Finally he got another place in another county and was moving away. The white man heard of it, rode after him, met the man with his goods on a wagon. Got in front of him,

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pulled a gun and made the family turn back to the old house."

"Why didn't your friend go on to the new place?"

"Go on. Lordy. Ef he had gone on he'd a' gone on plumb into eternity. That white man would a' shot up that whole family and got scot free. — He'd a' shot that family to death then claimed he was assaulted and nothing would a' been done about it.

"Colored folks have got no rights out here," he continued. "The young folks get restless and go away. The old folks, born here, are afraid to move for fear of worse. — They stay. They rent on shares or lease and the shares never run up enough to pay bills, and so the leases never run out."

"You don't mean to say the white landlords cheat?"

"Oh, no. They don't cheat. The figures never run right and the land never produces enough. You never heard the saying, 'ought's a ought, and a figger's a figger; all fur the white man, none for the nigger.' Well, that's about the way things run in the country. If a black man questions the figures of his landlord, that black man is impudent and must be put in his place, by the lash or the bullet, or the rope. What can we do?"

Sensing the hopelessness of the question and the futility of an answer, Bennet remained silent. They had just passed through a swampy stretch of roadway bordered by a thick growth of gall berry bushes when suddenly there smote their ears a most unearthly scream. It seemed, not like one in pain but more in fright and horror.

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Bennet reached over to the front seat and touched the driver on the shoulder. They were just at a bend in the road which hid them from a further view. The car was throttled down and was but barely creeping along, both men listening for the sound. Again the scream. This time it sounded closer. At the same time there sounded, as if in answer a long, low, half bellow, half groan, rising to a crescendo of a siren fire alarm and then diminishing till it ended in something like the distant roar of a lion.

Bennet began to feel creepy. He thought of hyenas and other wild animals, then recalled that he had never heard of any such inhabiting this section of the country. He reached for the revolver, Dr. Tansey had forced him to carry. The black chauffeur, frightened at first, regained his composure, turned in his seat and whispered:

“Alligator!”

Before Bennet could reply again came the screams of fright, like that of a frightened woman. Bennet thought it must come from some animal caught by the alligator and was being devoured. They had just turned the curve of the road, the machine in low, when a horrible sight greeted them. In the middle of the road stood an elderly white woman, a bonnet thrown back from her head. Her eyes horror-stricken with fright. While some forty feet in front of her, disputing the roadway was a young alligator, about seven feet long, jaws wide open, showing rows of ferocious fangs, his body lifted from the ground by its feet. Every time the woman turned to retreat the reptile opened its jaws wider and bellowed. When she faced it, however,

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it refused to leave the road on which it had been surprised and beat the road into dust clouds with its tail. The woman was so frightened she failed to hear the machine come up behind her.

Before Bennet realized what the chauffeur was doing, the latter had stepped from the car and was seeking a piece of wood with which to frighten the reptile from the road. Bennet, however, noted a towing rope in the bottom of the car and thinking he would like to have a live specimen to take with him North, stepped from the car, rope in hand.

The woman was just about to scream again when Bennet's voice sounded in her ear. "Keep still, we'll save you."

While the chauffeur was returning with a broken sapling, Bennet, rope in hand climbed a nearby tree, whose branches overhung the road. From one branch to another he made his way till directly over the reptile, then making a slipnoose he slowly lowered this down in front of the alligator. The reptile's eyes were so blinded with anger that he paid no heed to the noose as it touched the ground in front of him and was slowly dragged about his head till well behind the neck of the brute. The tension was too much for the old woman and she swooned, slumping to the middle of the roadway as she saw the rope about the reptile's body.

The alligator, seeing the motion of the woman's body falling, grew wilder in its anger and lashed the road furiously with its tail, at the same time bellowing fiercely

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The bellow, however, was shortened as Bennet tightened on the rope and lifted the brute from the ground till only the rear feet and tail were touching. The bellow became a scream as the reptile fought and struggled with this new danger which sought to choke him. In the dashing, swinging, swaying fight, the suddenness of the capture turned the bellowing into screams that were half coughs, Bennet was almost hurled to the ground from his lofty perch.

"Round the tree, 'round the tree," shouted the chauffeur. "Throw the rope 'round the tree."

Bennet struggled to do this when he caught the advice. Wrapping his legs about the trunk of the limb, wrestler fashion, he fought and pulled till almost exhausted. Finally he managed to lift the alligator from the ground and tie the rope securely to the limb. Panting and gasping after his struggle he returned to the ground. The elderly woman was just regaining consciousness when he reached her. The alligator was twisting, turning and struggling wildly, his body swaying from one side to the other, in the effort to free himself. The woman opened her eyes, then seeing the alligator swinging, closed her eyes again, shouting:

"Kill it! Kill it! Kill it!"

Bennet tried to lift her to her feet but she refused to rise. Repeating the request, "Kill it."

Bennet was still trying to sooth her when the chauffeur returned from the car with Bennet's revolver. Going close to the white glistening belly of the reptile, he aimed the revolver at a point just between the shoulders and

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fired twice. At the second shot the alligator's struggles diminished, a small stream of blood issuing from the wounds made by the bullets.

"Too bad. I wanted him alive," was all Bennet said as the chauffeur returned him the revolver. Gently the latter lifted the woman in his arms and bore her to the car, dispatching the chauffeur for some water from the stream they had crossed. Bennet moistened his handkerchief when the man returned and gently laved the woman's forehead. This soon revived her. At the opening of her eyes and returning memory, with a smothered scream she threw her arms about Bennet and began to cry.

She was soon soothed to calmness, however, by Bennet who convinced her that the reptile was dead. "Ugh!" she shuddered as calmness returned. "That's the first time I ever met one of the things on the road and I'll never come this road again. — I never knew them to come so far from the river before."

"They come out to lay their eggs," offered the chauffeur in explanation.

"Yes, so I've heard, but never met one before."

"You must have frightened him as much as he did you," smiled Bennet, reassuringly, as the woman clung to his hand. "Do you feel well enough to travel?" he asked solicitously. "If you do, I'll take you to your home and set you down."

"God bless you, and bring you a good wife," the old woman replied. "It's Sally Gorton that thanks you, Boy. Old Sally Gorton. I've been in these parts nigh onto six-

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ty years now and everybody knows me. — I live just beyond here. —

“All right, Mrs. Gorton. I’ll take you home.”

“Thank ’e, Bub. But don’t call me Mrs. Gorton. Ain’t had no one call me that since my sparkin’ days. Call me Aunt Sally. Everybody does. I like it. We’re all neighbors in these parts and to them all I’m plain Aunt Sally. So call me that.”

“All right, Aunt Sally,” humoring her. “If you’re Aunt Sally to all then you’ll be Aunt Sally to me. Do you live far?”

The chauffeur had now taken his place at the wheel and Bennet stepped into the car. “Couple of miles ahead. — Used to live on Park Lauriston’s place — lived there good many years but moved ’bout this time last year.” Mrs. Gorton was now herself, confidence returning quickly as she sat by the good looking youth at her side and prattled away like a young girl, in her hospitable, open hearted southern way.

At the name Lauriston, Bennet’s heart gave a wild throb sending the blood pulsing to his face.

“Ah, you know the Lauristons, then?” he asked trying to hide his confusion by making the question casual.

“Know them — know them. I know the whole kit and kaboodle of them. Known them since their bib and tucker days. Old Park Lauriston and I almost grew up together. Say I do know them!” Then turning to look shrewdly at the young man at her side, she asked: “You ain’t coming courting, are you? If you are you might’s

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well go back. Park Lauriston ain't going to let nobody but John Marley marry his Lida."

Bennet's face flushed more as the woman continued. "No sir. That's all settled. They're two proud families and the old men have fixed it up so's Lida and young John can hit it off together."

"What's the matter? Won't they let the young lady choose for herself?"

"Not much, they won't. Seems Lida went North last year and got herself mixed up in some scandal and now they're all against the girl. She's practically a prisoner till she makes up her mind to marry Young John. They're a cursed lot, with all their pride."

"What do you mean?" Bennet bristled defensively, surprised out of his determination not to make known his errand. "I chanced to meet the young woman, in the North and found her to be exceedingly ladylike."

"Going to call, are you?" Mrs. Gorton asked.

"That was my plan. I chance to be passing through, and knowing that she lived in this vicinity thought I'd call."

"Well, you won't be welcomed. I know.—Park Lauriston's too proud to let any strangers call on his child. Besides, I tell you they've fixed it up for Young John to marry her."

"I thought they didn't do those things here in the South. Thought they allowed the girl to choose," Bennet commented.

"Huh, you don't know the Lauristons. Though they

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live in the country they're all pride — with nothing to pride over, either. — True they've got a lot of old names in their families. But they've got other things too, and one of them's Park Lauriston."

"Evidently you don't like the family," Bennet remarked drily.

"Why should I? Didn't Park Lauriston throw me off his land last year? Me, an old woman, who'd befriended his family and nursed his children after their mother died and cared for them? No, I put a curse on the family. Let Lida marry Young John Marley. When they're married I'll tell them a thing or two that'll curse them all. The whole brood."

The car was gliding along quietly and came to a clearing off the road at the back of which nestled a small house from whose chimney arose smoke suggesting that the evening meal was in process.

"That's my house," Mrs. Gorton indicated.

They turned into the roadway leading up to it and drove up to the little garden patch with its path leading to the door behind a lattice covered with roses. The sun was setting in a large red ball through the trees, while far off to the east, over the woods darkness began to creep up the sky. There was a sound of cutting wood in the distance, with a rich voice yodling an evening tune in tempo with each axe-blow, as the echoes carried both from forest patch to forest patch across the cotton fields.

"Better come in and eat with us. Not much of a table but what I have you're welcome to. Besides, you can't

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get to Barnwell tonight, if that's where you're going," invited Mrs. Gorton.

Bennet gazed at the cosy inviting little cottage behind the rose trellis and debated whether to go on to Lida's home as was his intention or to accept the invitation and remain with this old woman's family. He thought of what the woman had told him about the Lauristons and concluded that perhaps in the circumstances it might be embarrassing for Lida. He decided to delay the visit till the morrow.

"Thank you, if it won't put you to bother," he responded. "I was not going to Barnwell, however. Are you fully recovered now?" he asked.

"My, yes. I've lived too long out among animals to let a thing like that disturb me for long. I'm not city bred like your women. I'm no doll," she answered in manifest pride in her vigor.

With that she stepped from the automobile and led the way to the little house. Summer twilight in the south is one of the most bewitching periods of the day and season; a time for romance and dreams and castle building. Bennet stood in the gateway also trellised over with rose bushes and looked toward the western sky. Dews were beginning to fall after the sun dropped behind the trees. From as far as the eye could see on one hand there seemed to be an unending forest, with tall long leaf pines standing out in silhouette, towering like giants over the remaining world of vegetation. Below them, far below, were the oak and other trees whose leaves were reddening. Across

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the cleared land in the rear of the house, the tops of the pines and oaks were still red and golden green where the sun's rays glinted from them. Long yellowish rays of sunbeams reached far up into the sky, like some monster searchlights at play with the world. From far over the fields came the chattering of sparrows at their angelus service. Off in a copse of woods a mocking bird was rendering an evening concert with a robin accompaniment. Gradually from the farm houses that dotted the horizon at varying distances there arose straight into the sky from their single chimneys, climbing into the air, towering, ambitious pillars of smoke. From a farm house could be heard the bleat of a sheep answered by the hunger call of a calf or the deep bay of a bloodhound in the distance. Bennet was entranced.

"What a wonderful place!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"It is right smart country," answered Mrs. Gorton as she watched the expression of admiration grow. "If you stay here long, you'll never leave," she added.

"I don't wonder they sing of the 'sunny south,'" exclaimed Bennet. "It is a delightful country."

"Yes, we're famous for beauty. Pretty horses, pretty women."

"A land to be enchanted in! A land of beauty!" Bennet was still under the spell.

"It is enchanted — and a princess over there — (nodding in the general direction of the Lauriston's lands) is

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waiting to be claimed by some prince and freed from her ogre of a father," commented Mrs. Gorton.

"I thought you didn't like the Lauristons," observed Bennet.

"I don't like Park. He did me wrong. But I've nothing against the girl. She's like her mother. The boy's like his father. They're making it a hell for that poor child now, just because she cast eyes over the Lauriston fence at some strange boy in the North."

"Is that true. — Do you know it to be true?" Bennet asked.

"I'm not sure. But what other thing could a poor girl be mixed up in that would make her father pen her up like a jailbird?" the woman asked.

"Oh, that can't be! That can't be," Bennet offered, his heart pained at the thought that Lida was perhaps suffering for him.

"Yes, it is. That Young John Marley is there all the time and the poor girl can't go anywhere without either Ellie Lauriston or he trailing after her."

Bennet's heart was agonized at the thought of what must be going on and how Lida must be suffering. He was glad now that he did not continue his journey to the house. He determined, however, to visit in the morning and if Lida was still suffering on his account and if her love had not lessened to take her away immediately.

CHAPTER XXVII

The rural south retires with the chickens and as darkness came on Mrs. Gorton prepared the guest chamber of her little home and her youngest son, a stripling of twenty years showed Bennet to his room. The others of her family were either married or off in turpentine camps till harvest time. "There was a time, when our family had servants too, like the Lauristons," he explained as if apologizing, "but that was long ago. Then we could have shown you such courtesies as the South used to offer its guests."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm glad to get a place to sleep as cosy as this, and I know my dreams will be pleasant with the scent of roses blowing on me during the night. Good night." He grasped the outstretched hand, in a hearty grip. He liked this family of plain people.

It was far in the night, however, before sleep came to his eyes. He lay looking through the open window into the starry sky thinking of Lida and what their love had brought them. He wondered what suffering she had endured and regretted that they loved. With such thoughts in his mind his eyes closed on dreams that were fitful as well as troublesome. The sun was hours high the next morning when he opened his eyes. As he came into a realization of where he was, across the field adjoining the yard there floated the guiding voice of a plowman turning furrows in a corn field. "Gee!—Haw!—Whoa! ———Haw." He looked in the direction of the sound

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and saw a man behind a plow, driving a team of horses in a field of head high corn, the reins from the team thrown over the man's head which was beneath the widest-brimmed straw hat Bennet had ever seen. The smell of the freshly plowed earth, the green blades of corn and the general brightness of the air filled Bennet with sudden resolution. He sprang from his bed, hurried his toilet and was soon in the yard behind the rose trellis.

Not seeing Mrs. Gorton or her son he started for the road, determined to walk about this country a little before going to the Lauristons. The earth, moistened with the dews of night, was just being dried by the sun. The leaves under the shade of the trees were still damp. Vigor and vitalizing joy made Bennet stride along with a heart full of strength and a smile on his face. He walked along the edges of the growing corn and fairly reveled in the verdure that spread out before him.

He was just about to retrace his steps so as to be prepared for the noon meal when he turned into a cross road and noted a woman approaching, her head down. She was walking slowly as if in deep meditation. He determined to get a glimpse of her face to see if she bore out the traditions of the south. The woman approached to within twenty feet of him before she realized that she was meeting someone. She raised her head and Bennet looked into the eyes of Lida.

The girl was changed almost beyond recognition. There were great dark circles about her eyes which had become hollowed and sunken. The pink of her cheeks was fading.

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She looked up, halted for a moment as if unable to believe her eyes then stumbled, half fell toward him. He sprang to her in time to prevent her falling.

"My Darling," he murmured.

"Truman — Truman — Truman —" was all she could say. "God has answered my prayer."

Bennet lifted her tenderly and folded her to his shoulder where she lay her head, weeping silently. Bennet was too moved for words. He could only press his cheek to hers while his arms held her tightly till her spell of weeping exhausted itself. When her tears ceased to flow and her heart stilled its flutter, she looked up shyly into his face. Her arms folded tenderly about his shoulder and their lips met.

"How I've prayed and hoped you'd come, Dear. I have wanted you — needed you so," she sighed.

"I wrote you several times after getting your last letter. Not hearing from you I wondered what had happened and came down to see," was his simple explanation.

"Take me away, Truman. Take me away." Lida's eyes filled again as she spoke.

"After I've seen your father," said Bennet.

"Don't do that, please. He'll kill you. — He's said so. Please don't think of that," Lida begged in alarm.

"He got one of my letters asking you to come. — He's placed a guard over me — he wants me to marry someone else — don't you see? — don't you see it can't be that way," she cried wringing her hands.

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Bennet soothed her but held to his determination. As she yielded she said in explanation:

"I have waited so long for you to come—I have wanted you so much and I need you so much I dread any further parting."

He embraced her tenderly while saying:

"Thank you, Dear Girl for that. It's worth wading through Hell for, and I'll not leave you again. When I go you go with me, and we'll be married. I must first, however, have your father's refusal or consent."

"It will never be consent, Dear. But tell me, where are you stopping. Whom do you know about here. — When did you get here," she prattled happily on, her mood shifting, not waiting for answers to any questions. When she paused, Bennet said:

"I stopped last night with a Mrs. Gorton, back on the road here. I came from Orangeburg yesterday."

At the mention of Mrs. Gorton, Lida gave a little gasp. Bennet turned to her questioning.

"Why, what's the matter? Wasn't that all right," he asked.

"Ye-e-e-e-e-es, I suppose so. How'd you happen to stop there?" she queried.

Bennet then recounted the experience of the day before, telling of the alligator episode and Aunt Sally's hospitality. When he concluded, Lida said:

"She dislikes us — I don't know why. — She even pronounced a curse on us last year," Lida stated half in soliloquy.

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"You're not superstitious enough to believe her curse could have any effect on you, do you?" Bennet asked.

"I don't know. I seem to have a lot of troubles. — Somehow I like her, yet I'm afraid of her."

"She seems a good old soul," was Bennet's observation.

"Well, it was good of her to take you in. — I thank her for that," Lida clung to his arm tenderly.

"Where will you stay tonight?" she asked.

"Don't know. — Suppose I'll make arrangements with her to keep me another night."

"I'll be happier tonight than I have been in weeks," Lida sighed as she looked into his eyes.

They had now started to walk along, Lida clinging to his arm when suddenly out of the shrubbery at the side of the road into their path stepped Young John Marley. Lida gave a gasp of dismay and surprise. John Marley stood in the middle of the road as if to dispute their passage, his feet spread apart.

Bennet felt a slight shudder run through the body of the girl at his side. He started forward. Lida stood still, her hand clenching and reclenching nervously about his coat sleeve. John Marley ignored Bennet and looked directly at the girl.

"Thought you'd skip out, would you — ?" he snarled. Lida's face flushed with indignation.

"Skip out? — No — Why should I skip out? I'm not yet your wife," she answered with a haughty toss of her head.

"Not yet — but you will be," Marley threatened.

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“Not to the man who has to stand guard over me,” Lida retorted indignantly. “I won’t stand for your following me any longer. And I tell you now I’ll never marry you. I—I—I’ll kill myself first. I want no more of your insults.”

Marley ignored the words but indicating Bennet, asked: “Who’s your friend?”

“A real friend and a true gentleman,” replied Lida proudly.

“Your northern friend, I suppose?” Marley continued.

“Northern or not he’s chivalrous enough not to impose himself on a lady when he’s not wanted—and he’s not cowardly enough to spy on a girl. He’s too much of a gentleman for that,” she ended.

Marley started toward the girl. Bennet quickly placed himself in front of her; menace in his attitude. “The lady has said that she wants none of your company.—You’d better go. Stand aside,” he warned.

He took Lida’s arm and walked by Marley, passing between him and the girl. When they had gone a few paces the latter turned to the couple. “So that’s your northern white nigger is it. Well, we treat ’em all the same down here. Better watch out or he’ll be decorating a tree too.”

Neither Lida nor Bennet heeded the insults or taunt, though Bennet felt a tremor in his companion’s arm. They passed on. When they reached the road that led to Lida’s house, the girl turned to Bennet.

“I’m sincerely sorry I can’t take you to my house to-night. I’ll get word to you tomorrow, however, where we

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may meet. And then, Truman Dear, we must get away."

Bennet looked at the drooping girl at his side, saw the lines of forlorn weariness manifested in the face and a great pity welled into his heart. He was reminded of the figure of Eurydice as she must have appeared to Orpheus when the latter looked back to see if she was much changed by her journey in the land of Proserpina. She seemed so weak and helplessly suffering that he longed to snatch her away from the present into a golden bright future.

"Dear Little Girl," he said, "I am just beginning to know what you must be enduring for my sake. I love you so I don't want harm to come to you. It kills me to see you suffer so. Would you be very lonesome should I go away. — Would it relieve you of your suffering?"

Lida looked up, touched his arm, tears dripping from her lashes.

"It would serve no good purpose to leave me. I'd — only — die. I cannot — and will not marry another. It is too late now, Dear. How would my love fare with you away?"

"Ah, but I only bring suffering to you. — And I can't bear to see you suffer. My love is not selfish enough to feed upon your suffering."

Lida shook her head in a sad negative. "I thought over all these things when we walked down the cinder path at college that night of the reception. You know, a woman looks at her love differently than a man. She weighs the cost. A man simply sees the object of his love, wants that

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love and strives to possess. Not so a woman. She calculates the cost, the obstacles, the chances of happiness and weighs the character of her man. When once she makes up her mind nothing changes her. I love you truly, and always will. I'm not one to love lightly."

"I know that, Dear, and I love you as sincerely. What love, however, can endure to see the object of that love suffer. Suppose I were suffering as you must be. Would you want to do differently than I?" he asked tenderly.

"I'd try to get you out of trouble as speedily as possible, but I'd never leave you," Lida suggested. "Take me away, please."

"I believe you — and bless you for it. I'll take you away tomorrow. I must be honorable, though, in the taking and honorably say to your father that I am taking you. At least I owe him that."

Lida smiled, as she stood on tiptoe to reach her lips to his. "*Aufwiedersehen*, then."

Never had words a deeper meaning to Bennet than these. He clasped her to his heart in a long embrace. "*Aufwiedersehen*," he repeated, tenderly. He stood watching her till she passed in at her gate far down the white sandy road and turning waved to him. As she tripped up the steps and entered, Bennet lifted his hat and bowed reverently then turned to retrace his steps to Mrs. Gorton's.

Once there he lost no time in asking for a chance to remain with her for a few days. He liked the locality so well, its picturesqueness and scenery. Her family was

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very willing to entertain the guest and soon placed him at his ease. Southern hospitality is so open and frank that a stranger is accepted at his face value till he proves himself undesirable.

Bennet spent the remainder of the day in unpacking his belongings and making himself at home in his surroundings. His mind was happier than it had been for several weeks. As he arranged his clothing on frames provided, and in the cedar chest Mrs. Gorton provided from her linen closet, he could not refrain at intervals from stepping to the window which opened toward the Lauriston house and gaze in the direction of Lida. The great live oak in front of the veranda seemed to wave its branches; Bennet was uncertain whether in a hostile or a friendly manner.

When Lida entered the house she was happier than she had been for weeks, knowing that her lover was near and that she would soon be leaving with him. Her heart was full of plans for the future and elopement. As she crossed the threshold of the door and was on her way to her room, the fiercely blaspheming voice of her father greeted her. She paused to listen. She distinguished three other voices also. Colonel Lauriston was pacing to and fro in the dining room raving as a madman, cursing God, his family, the world and himself. In his raging Lida realized that she was again the cause. She paused in the hallway long enough to hear her brother, Elvin, also angrily speaking to Young John Marley.

"I thought you were a man. Why didn't you kill the

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dog in his tracks? I'd have killed them both," she heard.

"There's plenty of time to kill," was Marley's sententious answer.

"Well, he's got his nerve with him. I thought you were going to watch Lida and take care of her. What sort of a husband would you make if you can't protect her." It was again Elvin's voice she heard.

"I'll protect her all right, all right when she's my wife. I went down to the stables for a minute and when I came back she was gone. I went right after her though," Marley explained.

"Yes, you went right after her — and was too much of a coward to protect her when you found her," sneered Elvin. "We don't want him about. First thing you know they'll be eloping."

"That's just what we will do," observed Lida mentally. She was on the point of taunting them with the fact but decided that discretion was better and continued to her room then locked the door securely behind her. "It's to be one woman against the pack of you now," she resolved.

During the remainder of the afternoon her maid, Chloe, was the only person she allowed to enter. She busied herself packing what belongings she considered her personal property. This occupied her till time for the evening meal which she ate in her room. As darkness came on she looked from her window at the familiar haunts and one by one bade them a mental farewell.

"I wonder, when, if ever, I'll see you all again. It's a sad way to leave you all, my friends, my woods, my hero

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pires, my cave where my childhood has been spent. I love you all and will carry you in my memory. You all were the best friends I had. Even your solitude was friendly to me. Love calls me and love must be obeyed."

Long she stood at her window, looking into the darkness. At a distance a hoot owl gravely spoke to the world out of his wisdom while in some nearer tree a screech owl answered.

"Good-bye, old friend. You've hooted me your last salutation, I fear. How fair one's birthplace seems when far away, or about to leave it. I wonder if at the hour of death we treasure what we've known in life as I treasure you at this moment. I shall smell the honeysuckle in my dreams; I shall build wreaths of the jasmine in my day dreams. Wish me well, friends, wish me well." She ceased to speak as her mind wandered off into pleasant fantasies.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Long she remained at the window going over the events of the past year and dreaming of Bennet; wondering if he had retired yet and if he had thought of her. She wondered if he realized how happy he had made her by coming in her time of need. All the world about her was in slumber and darkness such as is only known to a southern night.

Here and there a lightning bug flashed in the trees and shrubbery of the garden. A cricket chirped and a locust sang his quavering raspy number. Lida was still looking from her window, when, at her door, there sounded a faint and excited knocking. "Miss Lida — Miss Lida — Miss Lida," the voice whispered.

Lida returned regretfully from her dreams. She felt her way to the door. She recognized the voice as that of Chloe, her maid, and opened the door. The girl's eyes were so wide that they shone even in the darkness.

"Miss Lida," the girl reached out to feel for her mistress's hand. Lida touched her. "I'm here, Chloe," she said. "What's the trouble?"

The girl silently closed the door then stepped close to Lida. "They's sumthin' goin' on. Sumthin' mystery-like — very mystery-like."

Lida waited for details.

"Young Mr. Lauriston done gone off in the dark. Took his gun and gone off. John Marley gone with him too. Yessum, gone with him too. I was sitting on the steps by

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the post when they passed me. John Marley was saying, 'I got men all waitin' down by the cotton gin. They gwine take some Bunnit, or sumpin' like that and string him up. Sumpin's going on. They's up to mischief. They's mischief afoot. Shore's you born.'

Lida was perplexed for a minute but at the name Bunnit she recalled the threat of John Marley and his confident tone of the afternoon. She blanched. "Oh, Father," she groaned. "They're planning to kill him. Oh, God! *The Brutes!*" For a moment or two her mind was in a whirl. Anger and fear raced one another across her brain. Anger at the dastardliness of the plan and fear that their plan would be consummated and her lover killed.

"He must be warned! He must be saved!" she thought, as she puzzled her brain for a plan. Finally she grabbed the girl by the arm with such force that Chloe was forced to bite her lips to prevent crying out. The maid tried to free the grip but could not. Lida's mind was tortured for but a few moments, then plan after plan suggested itself only to be rejected.

"I must do something! I must do something!" she kept repeating to herself. Finally she thought of the cave in which she had played as a child. She could not find her way there at night even if she were successful enough to beat them to Mrs. Gorton's and warn Bennet of his danger. Then a daring plan evolved itself. She would hide Bennet in her own house till he could be piloted to the cave in safety. They would never think of looking in her house for him. He could be hidden in the old unused attic.

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No sooner was the plan framed in her mind than she began to plan for its execution. "Quick, Chloe," she said. "Go to the barn and bring me my horse, never mind saddling him." The maid departed. "They'll wait down at the cotton gin till all their crowd have come. I hope that will give me a chance to beat them," she reasoned.

Hastily throwing about herself a heavy wrap she went to the yard to await the coming of the horse. She heard the steps and realized that if she galloped, footsteps would be heard and her plan discovered. "Quick, Chloe, some burlap bags. Bring me some quick." The girl was gone and in a few minutes returned. "Some string—some string. Oh, why didn't you think of some string? Quick, girl, some string," she whispered excitedly.

Before the girl could offer any explanation Lida had shoved her in the direction of the house again. Chloe ran nimbly up the steps and into the kitchen, returning soon with a ball of twine. Having been on familiar terms with the horses of her father's place since girlhood it was not difficult for Lida to tie the burlap mufflers about the feet of the horse. With that done she led the animal to a block and was soon mounted. Cautiously she started and breathed a sigh of relief as she noted that the footsteps of the horse could scarcely be heard.

The animal stepped out gingerly at first but soon became accustomed to the mufflers. As far as the gate at the end of the lawn, Lida walked the horse. The cotton gin was somewhat to the rear of the house and off to the left of the road about a half mile. Once into the highway

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she struck the animal in the side with her heels and urged it into a gallop.

The hoofbeats could barely be heard. Lida smiled at the fact. It was a ten-minute ride to the Gorton house. As she neared the house a hound challenged and raced to the gate. Lida dismounted and soon made friends with the dog. This accomplished she led her horse to the yard fronting the house, hitched him to the trellis and then started for the rear.

Bennet had been unable to sleep and was sitting at his window watching in the direction of the Lauriston house, hence, when he heard the hound he was all alertness. When the horse came to the yard and he heard the creaking trellis, he was all attentiveness. He waited for a rapping at the door and when none came started to peer from his window. Until someone rapped he would not disturb the family. He was still waiting when he heard faint foot-falls coming around the corner of the house. In the darkness they recognized each other. Lida's tension relaxed as her heart filled with joy that she had been in time. Joy forced tears to her eyes.

"Truman—Truman—Truman," she whispered, a great tenderness enveloping her. "Is that you?"

"Lida, Heart, what are you doing here at this time? You ought to be home," he cautioned.

"Sh-h-h—" was her warning. "You're in danger. They've planned to kill you.— Oh, God, how can men be such brutes?" she agonized.

Bennet climbed through the window and leaped lightly to the ground.

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“Going to kill me?” he asked incredulously, taking the now trembling girl into his arms. “Why, I know no one here except these people in this house. Who would kill me?”

“John Marley, the man we met today. — He and my brother have gotten together a group of their friends and they’re perhaps on their way now. God knows what they’d do to you. You must hide. — I must hide you.”

“Why hide? They can’t kill me without cause.”

“You love me. That’s cause enough for them,” she explained.

“My Little Girl, how sorry I am for you. What trouble I’ve brought to you,” said he.

“Sh-h-h-h” she silenced him with a finger to his lips. “You’ve brought me yourself — the best man, and the only man, in the world for me. What do I care more?”

“You’re a jewel — and I adore you for saying that, Heart O’ Mine, but I must not allow it,” he argued.

“Don’t stand there. — Come on — they’ll be here any minute. They shan’t kill you unless they kill me first.” She led the way back to the house, made Bennet lift her then mount behind her. Gently and quietly she turned the horse’s head toward the road again and home. Her nerves were all atingle with excitement. Intently she scanned the darkness ahead of her and listened for sounds of any horses’ feet. Once she thought she detected sounds and pulled up on the bridle. Knowing that the horse would also detect the sounds and indicate the fact by a listening attitude of its ears she studied these. They were

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moving slowly back and forth indicating that her way was still safe.

She was almost half way home when this time she detected the sound of galloping of many horses still some distance away. Wheeling her mount to the left she deliberately entered a nearby cotton field and was soon hidden from view. Once in the field and behind the roadside hedge of trees she dismounted and stood by her horse's head lest he neigh and make known to the riders that someone else was about. The riders soon passed them and were on their way to the Gorton home. With these once behind her, Lida breathed a sigh of relief and began to cry softly.

Bennet comforted her and she soon regained her composure. Now she hurried the horse till near her own yard when they slowed down to a silent walk. Into the yard they came like spectres.

"Here we are, at last. Thank God," she breathed, as she dismounted with the aid of Bennet's hand. "I'm going to hide you in our attic for tonight, and tomorrow you must get away."

Chloe, the maid, was still waiting in the darkness for the return of her mistress and turning the horse over to the girl, Lida led the way to the attic.

"You'll have to make the best of it for tonight, Dear, and be sure to keep quiet. I'll come to you when the coast is clear tomorrow and get you away. I have a cave where I used to play when a girl. I'll see if that's safe and then take you there till we can get away."

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"You're a trump of a girl. God has been good to me to give me your love. I pray God I'll always deserve it," he said fervently. "You're a brave, jewel of a girl."

She clung to him in a long embrace then silently stole back to her room. Once in the room she recklessly threw herself across her bed and surrendered to tears as a relief to her emotions and a relaxation from the excitement of the past hours. It was well toward morning when she regained control of her nerves. Her body was still wracked by great dry sobs at intervals when she heard the footsteps of her brother's horse in the yard. She heard the horse led to the barn and the young man return, then enter the house.

The heaviness of the steps indicated the anger of the man. Lida listened intently, anger gripping her body and resentment at the atrocity of which he would have been guilty had she not thwarted their plans. She listened eagerly for any indication of whether Elvin suspected how Truman had been saved. He was grumbling and muttering as he undressed and prepared for bed. Footsteps back and forth in the room which was across the hallway from hers told Lida of his retirement act. The thud of a shoe sounded. Lida held her breath awaiting the fall of the second shoe. This came shortly and then she heard her brother's slippered feet shuffling about the room. Presently his steps passed her door on the way to the bath room. As he passed Lida heard him say:

"Must have heard us. — Durn him, — it's lucky he got away. — But he can't go far — we'll get him today."

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At that threat Lida shook a clenched fist in the direction of the bath room. "Never, if I can help it," she vowed in answer to the threat. She listened further to the mutterings of disappointment uttered by her brother, then finally succumbed to the drowsy feeling which followed her night of excitement and exertion. Bennet, immediately that the door was closed and the girl gone, stretched himself on the floor near it so as to prevent any sudden intrusion, should those who sought to harm him discover his hiding place. He could not sleep, however. Long he lay awake staring into the darkness of the room and pondering over his course of action. In the face of all the dangers he was causing, he wondered whether it was right for him to bring so much trouble on the one he loved with all his being.

"Which is the truer love," he argued with himself. "To persist in wooing the girl I love in the face of such hardships as I am bringing on her for the sake of that love, or to sacrifice that love for the peace of mind and bodily ease of the object of my love? — Which is the truer love?"

"I love the girl with all the devotion within me. I shall love her all of life till the end of time for me. Which is right? To give her up and continue loving her or to take her and flee. Once out of this unGodly country our loves and our lives would run smoothly. — I can make her happy, and will make her happy—." Thus through the long hours he debated till finally he swept all doubts from his mind as to the true course with the decision, "Oh, why worry? We'll get away today and forget this land."

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He was far removed from the sounds of the footsteps of the returning horseman and the incidents of which Lida was aware, and though tired he fought off the sleep that almost overwhelmed him until daylight appeared. With the first stream of light that came under the door he relaxed and closed his eyes. His next conscious moment was hours later when there was a slight tapping at the door and a whispered — "Truman, — Truman. Wake up, Dear. They've gone to hunt you. Now's the time. — Put these things on over yours, and put this paste over your face. When you've finished I'll come in."

CHAPTER XXIX

Lida had taken her maid into her confidence and won the girl's support to her plan. It was this. Bennet would dress as one of the farm hands, wearing a wide brimmed palmetto hat pulled well down over his face, leave the house and be piloted to the secret cave, after his face had been blackened.

Already Lida and the girl had been over to the cave and made it comfortable with a good meal there to welcome Bennet. From there, at night, when the coast was clear, the couple would make their escape and flee.

In twenty minutes after leaving the clothing, Lida again knocked at the door. This time a deep brown-skinned Bennet greeted her. "Will I pass?" he asked as he stood before her. Lida looked at him in his garb, inspecting him from head to foot.

"You look like a native," she confessed. "I don't like you that way and you'll have to get out of it as soon as you get to the cave. I want you as you are to me. — Just you."

Bennet touched her hand gently to his lips. "Hurry," she warned. "We've only a little while. They'll be coming back. When you leave the yard go straight to the field at the back of the house. There's where the hands are at work. Walk along by the fence to the end of the lane. When you get there a girl will be waiting. Follow her."

Bennet again kissed her hand. "I don't like to do this, Lida, Mine. It's not fair — but I suppose it's best."

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"It is best." She stamped her foot impatiently. "You must do as I say this time."

Bennet was led to the floor below and guided to the rear of the house. Lida pointed to the direction he was to take. She watched him leave the yard and walk toward the field. She stood watching for several minutes and then returned to the house, hurried into a light wrap and was about to leave the house when she came upon her father. He was staring vacantly about him and murmuring under his breath. Lida went up to him.

Colonel Lauriston looked at her without recognition. "Daddy," Lida called gently. "Daddy," why won't you —" she got no further. Colonel Lauriston began to murmur something about sheep in the pasture and passed her by, going to his own room. Lida's eyes filled with tears as she went down the steps of the veranda, then turned the corner of the house and started for the rear and down the field, following Bennet at a distance. One hand she held close to her breast just over her heart.

Bennet reached the end of the lane, passing the place where the hands were at work but giving no heed to him, except to glance at him casually from the middle of the field where they were. At the end of the lane stood Chloe, Lida's maid. Before Bennet overtook her she started off through the woods. For some distance she followed a beaten path. Bennet noted this but after going about a quarter of a mile the path was lost on the carpet of dead oak leaves and pine needles over which they walked.

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Birds were singing in the shadows. As they passed deeper and deeper into the forests, with their blazed pines oozing turpentine pitch into a box hole cut into the tree the woods became more and more quiet. On they walked till Bennet began to wonder where they were, when suddenly he heard a waterfall and through the trees he could see the glistening spray some one hundred feet at his right. At the base of the falls where the copse opened into a narrow bit of green meadow through which the rivulet from the falls ran trailing off to the Edisto River, the girl halted. The water was falling over a sheer cliff in three steps from the higher land above, draining a pond some miles away. The cliff seemingly having been formed ages ago when some cataclysm of nature caused a fault in the rocky bed by which the land below dropped.

At the base of the falls, stood a tall poplar tree whose roots seemed to have dipped into the little stream for sustenance. This poplar tree grew close to the cliff and some thirty-five feet up its limbs reached over and touched the cliff just where the water passed. By a process of erosion with the swaying winds these limbs and water had dug into the cliff behind the white sheet of water and hollowed out a cave. Moisture had softened the rock and clay till it crumbled and fell into the little pool at the base of the falls. Lida, in one of her play days of girlhood, in exploring the woods had climbed this tree and discovered the cave. Since then it was her cave and she spent many a day behind the water shed, making the cave wider and deeper as she dreamed of primitive days when Indians inhabited this section.

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As if by inspiration, when she heard her brother make his threat, she was reminded of this cave and thought it an ideal place for hiding. When she awoke in the morning she hurried to make preparations to take Bennet there. She and her maid had made two trips to the place and had refurnished it from her girlhood days, providing a camping outfit and a table and chair.

When Bennet reached Chloe she pointed to the trees. "See that tree," she said. "You'all hav to clum up to wher 'at hole is. Thas yo' home fur now. Miss Lida'll be here soon. She'll tell you'all de rest."

From the tree there hung a grapevine rope, leafy and heavy with green grapes, this entwining about the limbs of the tree above and losing itself in curtains of Florida moss. After giving her instructions the girl wheeled and was gone. Bennet looked at the tree and after stepping off some fifteen or twenty feet ran toward it and leaped as high up the trunk as he could, climbing up the remainder of the distance, with the help of the grapevine rope. As he reached the heavy limb extending into the cave he paused to view the sight within.

Here was a cave, well lighted from the sun shining through the spray, about as deep and as high as a large room. Far back in a corner was a book shelf with a few volumes on it, while on the opposite side at the wall was a camp table covered with food. Between the two was a cot covered over with a couple of horse blankets.

"Well, of all things," he exclaimed. "Who'd have thought such a thing possible. As dainty a room as could

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be wished for. — And this is hers.” He almost felt it too sacred to enter. “Well, well, well,” he exclaimed. He was still admiring the place when he heard a voice from below:

“Well, hurry and get in. I’m coming up.”

Bennet looked down and beheld Lida standing at the foot of the tree gazing up at him. He stepped into the cave and awaited her. Practice had made her adept at climbing up, and a pair of knickers, and puttees gave her the freedom to climb. She was soon standing by his side, her cheeks pink and a bewitching roguish smile on her face. Bennet reached a hand to help her into the cave.

She stepped to the center and stood, arms akimbo, turning from side to side viewing the three walls with pride. “Well, what do you think of it?” she asked admiringly.

Bennet looked at her, then about the cave and at her again. “A true fairy bower,” he exclaimed. “Who’d ever think there was such a place. I never dreamed there was outside of story books of younger days.”

Lida smiled joyfully. “And they’ll never find you here. No one — not a soul except Chloe knows of this place, and she only knew of it today.

“What a wonderful place for my Fairy Sweetheart,” Bennet exclaimed looking at the girl in her trim suit, from her puttees to knickers and open-throated blouse.

“It is a darling place,” Lida added with pride. “Everything at hand for comfort. Grapes within reach — water for bathing and drinking and, with a camp cooking

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outfit, a very happy time could be spent here." At the words suggesting happiness, Bennet's face clouded.

"It would be a happy place for you were it not for me," he said sorrowfully.

"What do you mean?" Lida asked.

"I mean that by my loving you I've brought trouble to you. I can't bear to see you suffer," Bennet returned.

"Why, I'm not suffering. Can anyone suffer who loves really and truly? And does not love counterbalance any suffering? It is a joy to suffer for the man I love. It makes love all the dearer. It is what makes life worth living now. Why I've only lived since I've known you."

"If all these experiences have been yours what must mine be, to whom you are life itself — to whom you are dearer than life?" Bennet's voice was low and vibrant with feeling. "It is I who have learned to live since loving you. Your love has opened the world to me — made me realize that I'm a real part of the universe. I understand better now, the light of the stars at night; the light of the moon, and the very darkness itself since your love has come into my existence. I can better sense the motion of the universe about us because of your love, and My Heart, My Heart, O, how I love you!"

He had taken the girl into his arms and her head lay confidently and contentedly on his shoulder. The world itself seemed forgotten. They stood silently after the speech for some minutes, each dreaming and looking into space. Bennet was the first to be recalled back to the present.

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"Won't they miss you at the house?" he asked.

"Why should I care? I'm with you. That's enough."

"Yes, but you know we must get away tonight or tomorrow at latest. We have to plan for that."—After a moment's pause Bennet continued. "And yet, Dear Heart, I wonder if I'm right in taking you away from all you've known and loved in your growing years?"

Lida turned to him. "You just said you loved me."

"Yes, it is this love, — the very strength of it that makes me hesitate to ask you to leave all and go with me—to make such sacrifices as you are making, to endure what I am bringing on you."

Lida stood away from him suddenly. As she did so a small silver and pearl handled revolver dropped from her bosom. Bennet, surprised, stooped to pick it up. Lida also reached for it at the same time. Their hands met warmly. Bennet grasped the weapon. He held it before him in his open palm.

"What's this for?" he asked.

"Lida's face flushed as she laid a hand on his shoulder. "That was to save you, Dear. I—I—didn't want any harm to come to you."

Bennet looked at the girl so intently that her eyes drooped. "The only one who could have wished me harm would be your brother or Marley. Would you have shot them for me?"

Lida leaned her head on his breast and clutched the lapels of his coat as she began to weep. "I love you more than anything else in the world. I would kill even—to — save you."

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Bennet placed his arm about the girl and comforted her. He looked at the face below his own and then at the revolver in his hand while into his mind came Kipling's words about the female of the species. He lifted the girl's face till their lips touched in a lover's embrace. Then he handed the revolver to her and pulled one of his own from his pocket. "That's enough protection for me," he said. "I don't believe I need that as long as I have two good hands," he added.

"You'll be careful, always, won't you, Truman?" she warned solicitously.

"Yes."

"For my sake, Truman, you'll always be careful?" she asked again.

"Don't you worry, Little Girl. I'll take care of myself. Better be getting back to the house. They'll be missing you."

"Oh, I forgot all about your breakfast. You must be starved," she turned to the table.

"Well, there is a decided emptiness somewhere about me. Hadn't thought of it before, though," he laughed.

"You poor boy. And Chloe and I brought food here for you this morning." She turned to the little table and lifted napkins from the luncheon. "Come," she said, "Let's eat."

Bennet lost no time in placing the table where he could sit on the cot and Lida on the chair. "All the comforts of home," he said. "God bless our home," he added.

The two sat and soon devoured the food, both being

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hungry and like two children at play over this meal. When the meal was finished, Lida gathered the dishes together. "I'll leave them here we may want them again," she said. "I'll wash them though, and you can dry them. Come on," she invited. Bennet jumped to the task with relish. Leaning over the cliff, Lida allowed the water to wash each dish then handed it to Bennet who dried each as it was handed to him.

"This is great fun," she smiled as she handed him the last glass. "Like camping out, or living as the early settlers and pioneers did. What a glorious time they must have had."

"Yes, and many a hardship," Bennet added.

"All for us, though, and the land we have," Lida observed.

When the table had been tidied Lida decided to return to the house. It was after noontime then and hurriedly sliding down the grapevine rope she looked up to give a last warning to Bennet. "Be careful now," she said. "I'll be back before sundown."

With that, after blowing a kiss to Bennet from the tips of her fingers so daintily that Bennet was almost tempted to descend and get a real one, she turned and was soon lost in the shadows of the trees. Bennet turned to his hiding place, and being drowsy, took one of the books from the shelf and started to read. He was not occupied long with this, however, before his eyelids drooped and he stretched out on the couch, sound asleep.

It was far into the afternoon before he awoke again.

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When he did so it was without opening his eyes. With his eyes closed his first consciousness was that someone was watching him. He kept his eyes closed for a moment or two longer as if to make sure that his sense was right. With the surety that some eyes were staring at him he slowly opened his to see Lida standing over him.

"Oh, what a sleepy head! I thought you'd never wake."

"Why should I wake with such a sweet guard as you watching over me," he bantered.

"Yes, but I might have been someone else — some enemy."

"Never mind what might have been. It was you and I'm glad," Bennet said thankfully.

She seated herself beside him, placing her hand in his. Her face clouded. "I'm afraid I can't go with you tonight, Dear." Bennet's heart sank into a dungeon of gloom.

"I thought you'd realize I was bringing too much trouble on you."

"It's not that, Dear. I'm going, but not for a day or two. Daddy's not well. I think his mind's weakening," she explained sorrowfully.

Lida then related her experience of the morning when she met Colonel Lauriston and he failed to recognize her. "He's been woefully upset," she continued. "He hates to think of my loving you and marrying you. It has worried him so that I think his mind is breaking."

"Heart of Mine, even though we love as dearly as we do, I think we'd better separate — at least for a time. — Time, perhaps, will right things."

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"Time will never righten things to the extent that my father or my brother will change. I know you're white so far as blood, bearing and character are concerned. And the rest makes no difference to me. Down here, though, people see things differently and time will never change them.

"I don't want to live down here. I want to be where you are. I want to be where my love is — and that's with you. I don't want to leave Daddy, just yet, though. I may never see him alive again when I leave," she prophesied.

"I think it best for your sake that I go back alone. It will be sad for me. — Life will be gone but the memory of you will always be with me. Can't we let the love we feel remain in our hearts, — can't we treasure each other though far apart, for having known and loved each other? I have never intended that my love should bring you harm — that it should cause you a moment's pain."

"You'll cause me more pain by leaving me. Life will be dark and drab without you."

"Still I don't think I'm worthy of all the sacrifice you're making."

"Am I the only one making sacrifices?" she asked.

"Aren't you making sacrifices for me? Your family opposes the match as well as mine. You are sacrificing them, why should I cling to mine. We have our own lives to live. We have our own ways to make in the world. You, yourself have said that. I'm willing to make my sacrifices for you, just as you're willing to make them for me."

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"After all, how much difference is there between us? None in reality. It's just a matter of pride and narrowness. Loving you I have not lost anything. Rather have I gained," Bennet concluded.

"Yes, and my life has been enriched by your love. — No, let's think about other things. I can't leave my father just yet. He just sits about and stares and stares. He won't eat. And this afternoon I came across him in the barnyard praying to a calf. — Wait a few days to see if he gets better, then we'll go. You'll be perfectly safe here," Lida assured.

"Oh, it's not my safety that I think about," Bennet explained.

Lida looked out through the curtain of falling water. I must go back to the house now. I've brought you something more to eat and I'll come back before dark with news. By the way, they're scouring the whole of creation for you. Ellie went to Mrs. Gorton's this morning when he got up and got your bag. He brought it to the house and has it in his room. The whole countryside has been called on to find you. — And here you are," Lida chuckled gleefully.

"Oh, why didn't you wash that stain off your face?" she asked. "I don't want to see you that way. I want you to be as you are."

With that she took a napkin from the lunch basket and held it under the spray then stepped over to where Bennet was sitting and began removing the stain.

"Naughty Boy," she said playfully. "Don't want to

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wash his face, eh. Well, I'll do it for you." After removing all the stains she looked at Bennet tenderly. "There," she said, "You look like the man you are, not like someone else."

She soon started down the ladder again and on reaching the ground called:

"I'll be back before dark. Cheer up. Don't be lonesome."

CHAPTER XXX

Lida's heart was light as she neared her home despite the troubles that swirled about her. So lighthearted was she that she was whistling gaily. Her brother heard the tune and watched her as she crossed the yard. Seeing her gaiety aroused his resentment against the girl and her lover. He looked at her long and steadily, a scowl on his face. As she reached the top step he grew suspicious of her happiness. She was about to pass him and enter the dining room when he caught her by the shoulder.

"Here! Where've you been?" he demanded abruptly.

She whirled from under his grasp and stood facing him, piquancy and daring in her attitude. "What matter's it to you?" she asked.

"No girl's got any business running about over the country alone."

"Indeed? Since when? — I've done that all my life. At least until you and Daddy, appointed Mr. Marley my guardian?" she taunted.

"You need a guardian, all right. You ought to be put away," Elvin observed.

"And why?"

Elvin refused to answer. Suddenly he pointedly asked:

"Where's that — that —" he hesitated then continued — "Bennet?"

"How should I know," she answered innocently. "You knights of the old fields ought to know best. Didn't you find him last night?"

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"No, we didn't find him, but we will and when we do —." He did not finish the threat for Lida whirled snapping her finger in his face.

"That for your threat. I'm ashamed of you all.— Murderers at heart. Murderers in soul.— And all for what? All because I want to marry the man of my choice."

"Yes, but he's got black blood in his veins. And no sister of mine will ever marry a black man.— No! by God, No."

"Ellie, Brother of Mine, he's as white as you — and in some ways whiter," Lida taunted.

"He may be white in skin but a drop of black blood in his veins, you know what that makes him, down here."

"It doesn't alter his manhood or character, or humanness. And from what I've seen of southern chivalry he overtops all of you. You men are chivalrous superficially. At heart you're just animal. I've had chance to think over some of the things I've seen down here lately and they don't compare very favorably with chivalry. Every woman is fair game to you men, whether she is black or white. It little becomes any of you to talk.

"Besides birth is a mere matter of accident. We can't help what we're born but we can improve on circumstances and environment. And I'm beginning to believe that there's as much nobility in one race as another, taken man for man."

"Well, you'll never marry Bennet. This country won't stand for that kind of a marriage," her brother predicted.

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"No, it won't stand for that kind of a marriage. A marriage that is honorable, and clean, and noble, and God-like, but it will stand for associations in the dark between white men and black women, where these associations are forced on poor defenceless women. It will stand for the rearing of two families, one white and the other black, so long as they're in adjoining counties," Lida fought back.

"That's true, and it's not always that the counties are different either." Both Lida and Elvin turned quickly to see the speaker. They looked into the eyes of Mrs. Gorton.

"Howdy, Mrs. Gorton," Lida greeted the woman. "Come up and join us. We were just having a brotherly spat."

"Yes, I heard your quarrelling and didn't want to spoil a good fight. You know the best fight I ever saw was a family affair. They're always the best and sometimes the most vicious. I don't know why nature made it so but there seems always antagonisms between brother and brother, and brother and sister. Sometimes they're bitter and last a lifetime. Sometimes again they're just temporary and, like all children, the fights are soon forgotten. But that's right about these men and their didoes. I've had the experience, I know.

"But I didn't come here to settle or to join any fussing. I came here to find out what all this excitement's about — this running around over the country looking for a white man and calling him a black man."

"But he is black, Mrs. Gorton," maintained Elvin. "He is black."

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"G'long with you. Didn't I have him at my house? Didn't he save me from a 'gator in the road 'tother day? If he's black then you're black. But what's he done, that you should run him off in the night and go hunting him in the daytime?" She looked from Lida to Elvin and back to Lida again.

"He wanted to marry Lida," Elvin blurted out. "Fancy a man with black blood wanting to marry my sister."

"He's as good as you," defended Lida hotly, "and a lot better."

"I don't give a hooting hang, he won't marry you. I'll see you both dead first." Then turning to Mrs. Gorton. "Mrs. Gorton, tell her how preposterous the thing is. My father is already losing his mind over the affair."

"Park losing his mind? Park losing his mind? Not over that. He's got better sense. He's got a lot of pride but his family is cursed. I told him so last year. I tell you so now. What right's he got to lose his mind over Lida's marrying the man she wants? What difference does it make if there is black blood in his veins. Most likely there's some black blood in the veins of all of us. Perhaps there's some in mine. I know there's some in Park's and therefore there's some in yours, Elvin, and some in yours too, Lide. Go on, marry your man, if he's good. Don't mind these airs."

Elvin reeled as from a blow at the news the woman imparted. For a few seconds he was dazed. His eyes went wide. He looked at his hands, studied his fingers, the bony, hair-covered, vein-bursting back of his hands, in a

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long silence. His intakes of breath were deep and spasmodic. To Lida the news was appalling also. It likewise took her breath. But she soon recovered and there filled her heart a happiness that almost forced her to scream. Before she could speak, Elvin recovered himself and spoke.

"Woman, you lie. You came here last year to taunt my father when he kicked you off his place. You come again to taunt him. If you were a man I'd kill you. I'd make you eat those words."

"You might kill me," Mrs. Gorton hurled back, "but you can't make me eat true words for the records will tell. You go to the Courthouse and look over the old records. You'll see where, in one branch of the family way back, one member married a half breed slave woman, ran away with her, and raised a family, perfectly respectable. An offshoot of that family came back years after to claim his part of the estate and married into the Lauriston line. Out of that union came Park's father and out of that union came you, Elvin and Lida. Put that in your pipe. Go see the records and believe."

Elvin wheeled, with an oath on his lips and went into the house.

Mrs. Gorton continued: "Now if you've murdered that boy and made off with his body I'll have the law on you all. Such a good manly boy. Much like my Ben. If you all have murdered that boy I'll hound you to jail."

Despite her former dislike for the woman, Lida could have hugged her for her interest in Bennet, and her dis-

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closure. It relieved her of any reason for listening to the pleadings of her family. They were all of one blood. She cared not for prestige of name such as the Lauristons had borne.

The statement of fact by Mrs. Gorton caused no change in her. She was tempted to take the old woman into her confidence and tell her that Bennet was safe but wisely held her counsel. As the old woman departed muttering threats against those who had made off with Bennet, and vowing vengeance, Lida rushed to her room where she gave vent to her feelings of joyousness. Once alone she danced like a girl gone mad, intermittently laughing and singing snatches of songs. She decided she must tell Bennet immediately. Scarcely could she control herself. With her desire to give Bennet the news she could with difficulty wait till late afternoon as she had promised.

As she pondered over the new turn in her affairs she heard her brother raging in his room. Suddenly she heard his door open and shut with a loud slam while he strode down the stairs and out to the stables. A short while later she heard him ride away. She gave him no further thought for the moment, realizing that Truman was safe. She remained in her room for a time lest her brother return. When he did not after an hour, she made preparations for going to Bennet.

The sky had now become overcast. "Oh, Dear!" she mused. "It looks like rain and I fear our plans will be spoiled for tonight. Still she hurried toward the cave. Once there she peered behind the sheen of water to see

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Bennet watching her approach. When she had climbed to the cave Bennet extended a hand to help her in. She was all smiles and gaiety while Bennet's face was clouded. Before she had time to recover her breath he said:

"I've been thinking since you've been gone and have decided that I must leave you."

"Why leave me, when I've such good news for you?"

"Don't jest, Lida, Heart. This is not a matter for jesting," Bennet said seriously.

"All right, Old Grouch. I'll keep my good news, then," she pouted. "Just when I'm dying to tell you, too."

"Well," he capitulated. "What's this great and good news?"

"Guess," she teased, coming to where he was sitting and placing a hand confidently on his shoulder.

"I give up. — Couldn't guess in a thousand years," he admitted.

Lida waited for a few moments hoping he would make an attempt. When he continued to refuse she started: "Mrs. Gorton's been to the house this afternoon."

Bennet perked up at the information. "I thought you were enemies," he observed.

"She's worried about you." She stroked his head as she spoke. "She came to inquire of Elvin, what had become of you and to threaten to make it hot for him and the rest of them if they have done away with you. You've won her favor, all right. I've a mind to be jealous — but I won't, just for that," she teased.

"She's a nice old lady," Bennet commented.

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"That isn't the best news, though," continued Lida. "She gave me news today that makes me happier than I've ever been."

"Ever?" he questioned as he placed a hand on hers resting on his shoulder. Both were looking out through the sheet of water pouring down in front of them.

"Yes, *ever*," Lida continued. "She bent over till her lips nearly touched his ear as she whispered, 'She told me there was colored blood in our family too.'"

Bennet turned slowly to look at her, doubt showing in his face as he realized the import of her words. "There's colored blood in our family — in me too. — And I'm glad — proud of it." At this announcement she kissed his cheek tenderly. "And that's not all," she added. "There's some of that blood in many of the families about here. — Elvin is raging."

"That can't be so," Bennet doubted.

"Truly," Lida answered soberly. "She said the records are at the courthouse and would prove it."

"Many a family will be shocked to learn the news," Bennet commented drily.

Lida then recounted the events at the house, with her quarrel with Elvin, and of the appearance of Mrs. Gorton while they were in the midst. "And after she told us, as I was waiting for time to come to you, Elvin saddled his horse and rode away, bursting with madness," she concluded.

As she ended she looked out among the trees then exclaimed: "Oh, dear, it's raining."

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Bennet came and stood beside her. "Too bad — too bad," was all he said.

"Now we can't get away tonight. It'll probably rain a couple of days."

"We can wait."

"You won't mind staying here?" she asked doubtfully.

"Of course not. You'll be visiting me, won't you?"

"Certainly, Goosie," she twitted. "I must be getting back now before it gets dark." In a few moments she was gone and Bennet was alone.

CHAPTER XXXI

Upon Elvin Lauriston's hasty departure from home which Lida had witnessed, he rode straight to Young John Marley's. Riding into the wide yard of the Marley home, he found Young John sitting on the veranda. Without dismounting he beckoned to Marley.

"Come here, John," he bade.

Marley leisurely left his seat and approached the horse-man. "What's the trouble?" he asked. "You look as if you had buried your last friend," he commented.

"I want you to come with me to Orangeburg," Elvin explained.

"What tonight?" the astonished Marley asked. "Why, man, it's going to rain before morning."

"That won't matter. 'Twon't be the first time you've been out in the rain, will it?" Elvin inquired.

"Yes, but what's the rush? Won't tomorrow do?" he parried.

"No, tomorrow won't do. We've got to get there tonight so's I can look up some records first thing in the morning. Aunt Sally Gorton's made some statements about my family that I want to look up. If they're not so, woman or no woman, she'll answer to me for them," explained Elvin.

"If you take my advice you'll not go digging into the past and let Aunt Sally rave. I don't know what she said but there's a chance that what she said might be true. She's a wise old bird, she is," he advised.

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"What she said's not true and I'll prove it. She said there's black blood in my family and if she's lied then she'll take back the words or take a beating," he threatened while his face scowled.

"Aunt Sally's been in this world a long time and may know a lot about us we don't ourselves. You can go looking in old closets for skeletons if you want but here's one that won't. If Aunt Sally said anything like that about me, I'd say she was crazy and let it go at that. You know lots of our ancestors, mine and yours, weren't all purists or saints just as you've not been. I say forget it," Marley advised again.

"So or not so, I want to know," Elvin insisted. "Come on, saddle your horse and let's go. We'll get there before midnight."

"Well, if you must go, I suppose I might just as well go with you," Marley yielded. "Suppose you find what she says is true? What'll you do about it? You can't change the blood now. You'll best forget about it," he again exhorted.

Elvin was obdurate, however, and it was not long before the two men were on the road to Orangeburg and the courthouse. They reached the city an hour or so before midnight and, after seeing their mounts well rubbed and in their stalls for the night went to the Planters Hotel where they secured rooms for the night. Marley was soon asleep but Elvin Lauriston was so disturbed over the events of the day that sleep refused to visit him for several hours.

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Both men were astir early the following morning and were at the courthouse shortly after the doors were opened for business. The city had now recovered from the horrifying mental state which the lynching and deaths had created and life was resuming its usual tenor. There were more than a dozen loiterers about the fence near the gates, mere idle, indolent citizens eager to debate any subject with his neighbor, or to expound theories on how to manage everything from the street cleaning to farming and directing the Universe.

As Elvin and Marley entered the gate and started for the door this group turned from their weighty discussions, to the visitors, following with their eyes till both men were lost to view inside. Their curiosity satisfied to that extent they turned to their task of viewing the pageant of passing life across the street, after expectorating and shifting their tobacco to the other sides of their mouths.

Elvin strode to the clerk's office followed by Marley. The clerk a dapper, little, quick-motined individual met them as they entered, at the same time rubbing his hands like a country salesman.

"Good morning, gentlemen," was his blandishing greeting. "Can I help you in any way?"

Elvin lost no time in explaining his errand. "You have here the records of births, deaths and marriages?" he asked.

The clerk bowed and smirked again, "Oh, yes," he replied.

"Records of black as well as white people?" Elvin asked again.

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"Well, sir," the clerk smiled ingratiatingly. "We have the records of the whites as far back as Colonial days but those of the blacks are only of recent years. You know marriages among blacks got but little attention from our fathers in the old days. Hence those records are not completely kept, except as to slaves and their owners."

"May we see the records?" Elvin asked.

"Certainly, sir. They're kept in the basement. You may find the place dusty," the clerk explained apologetically. "It's been years since they've been used." As he spoke he was piloting the two to the basement of the courthouse and into the far regions off in the right hand corner. The basement was poorly lighted except for the oil lamps resurrected by the clerk and as they walked rats and mice were heard scampering from under the feet of the visitors, excited over the intrusion to what had been for years their unmolested domain.

As the men walked, in the dim light Marley and Elvin espied in front of them a large, mouldering, oaken door of a design, hand carved, no longer in architectural vogue. To this the clerk approached and from a bunch of disused keys selected a long rusted one and inserted it into the lock. As the key creaked its way into the lock the scampering of many more vermin feet could be heard. The lock turned with difficulty. After several attempts the lock yielded and the knob turned. The clerk placed his body against the door and it also yielded, though stubbornly. As it opened the long rusting hinges squeaked so sharply as to make the spine twist nervously. A gust

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of sickening, vitiated musty air greeted the men, causing Elvin to turn and gasp, and the others to breathe in spasms.

"Wait a minute. Don't go in yet," the clerk cautioned. "Let the air clear first," he warned. Elvin and Marley halted as advised. "There ought to be a ventilator here somewhere," the clerk continued. "If we can find that and open it the air will soon be cleared so one can enter safely." After hunting for a moment or two, "Ah," he exclaimed. "Here it is."

The ventilator proved to be a window just above the ground in the foundation. It had been neglected for so long, sand and dirt from rains of many years, had almost hidden it. The clerk unlatched it and pushed it open. "Now, that's better," he exclaimed. "You gentlemen can now remain and work as long as you want," he said, as he departed. "You will find the older records here," indicating the left hand corner of the room. From here they go forward to the later years. All recent records, however, are up stairs. I presume you don't want those, do you?"

"No, here's what we want," Elvin explained.

"Stay as long as you wish," the clerk invited. "When you leave close the doors. Everything will be all right."

"Thank you, I don't know how long we'll be," Elvin replied.

Left to themselves the two men began their search. "What a dismal sickening place," Elvin commented. Their oil lamps gave off a flickering light that made the place appear some long forgotten catacomb. Raising the lamps

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above their heads the two men looked at the place.

"Elvin, you're crazy to have come in here. It gives me a creepy feeling. — It's like uncovering some old tomb. — If these old books could talk what a story they could tell."

"They do tell stories," Elvin commented drily. "And I've come here to learn one of them. — Let's see. We'll trace the Lauriston family first. — We'll have to start with my father's father." Here he reached for one of the volumes. His hands blackened with the dust and the air filled, causing both men to cough distressingly. When relieved they continued.

"How're we going to begin looking? — We won't know where to start for we don't know just what we're looking for?" Marley questioned.

"I'm looking to see where the black blood, Aunt Sally Gorton mentioned, comes into the family," asserted Elvin. "And I'm going to find it, if it's here."

"Guess you'll have to trace the marriages then. I think they went by families from generation to generation, according to this book," Marley suggested. "My! they gave a lot of time to penmanship in the old days. How faded and yellow the ink is. — Look at this. Here's the Middleton family. — That's right. See they kept the family name running from one set to the other."

"Look for Lauriston, then. — See if you can find that book," suggested Elvin.

"Lauriston — Lauriston — L — L — L —. Here's Livingston," Marley called as he studied the pages. "Here's Lucas," he continued, and Lomax — and Lesters — and

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Littlejohns — And — Ah, here you are. Here you are," he finally exclaimed excitedly. Lauriston hurried to him and bent over his shoulder peering at the page in a leather bound volume of unusual dimensions.

"There's Dr. Frederick Lauriston who attended General Oglevie in the Revolutionary time," Marley continued. "He married — Let's see. He married," his finger traced across the page. "He married Elizabeth Cooper. Their three sons married white, all right. And, — the male children of the next generation married white; and the next generation; and the next generation," he continued to trace, while Elvin looked over his shoulder following the tracings. "And the next," he continued. "Ah," he drew a long breath. "Here it is. Here it is," Marley exclaimed excitedly. "See, see, one of the sons in this generation, a lawyer, married out of the race. See, Elvin, there it is, sure's you're born. Married Elspeth Witherspoon, *femme de couleur*. Well, well, well. *Femme de couleur*. That means colored woman."

Elvin was speechless. He stared vacantly at the words written on the page and standing out before him from another day and time. He could not believe the words though they seemed to stand out in two-inch size. His breath came quick and in pent up bursts; his eyes widened and seemed to bulge from their sockets. His companion's finger rested at the expression. The room was so still a mouse gnawing in the far corner of the room could be heard.

Marley was the first to break the spell. "Well, well,

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well," he continued. "Who'd ever have believed it."

Elvin recovered his breath. "My God," he exclaimed. "She was right. — Aunt Sally was right!"

"That's nothing," comforted Marley. "Let's look at some of the others. See here. Here's another — and here's another *femme de couleur* marriage. They must have been pretty white and pretty women for that."

"Turn over to your own family. Let's see that," suggested Elvin.

"Not by a durned sight!" exclaimed Marley positively. "Not by a durned sight! What I don't know I don't want to know. Let the dead stay dead. You wanted to know about yours and you found out. I don't want to know about mine. I know enough," he announced emphatically.

"Why almost every family, somewhere along the line, seems to have spoiled the strain," observed Elvin. "What a land. I wonder if these people knew their origin?" he asked indicating the pages containing the family names.

"Of course not," exclaimed Marley. "Did you know yours?"

A cold moisture dampened Elvin's forehead as he stood in the cold clammy vault. "These books and records ought to be destroyed. Suppose bye and bye somebody else sees them?"

"Yes, just suppose," suggested Marley facetiously.

"They must be destroyed," murmured Elvin musingly. "They must be destroyed. Come on John," he urged. "I've seen enough."

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"I've seen too much, myself," Marley commented.

Both men closed and replaced the books, stepped from the room and closed the door gently, as if in awe. They made their way above and went silently to the street. Once again in the open, despite the cloudy skies, they blinked and rubbed their eyes to accustom themselves to the change. Still silently, they made their way to their hotel, where for a time they busied themselves removing the dirt and dust from their hands and clothing.

By the time this was concluded, rain which had been threatening all the morning began to drip steadily from the sky. Toward evening there was a letup and the two men left the hotel and made ready to start for their homes. They were on their way before darkness set in.

It was nearing midnight when Orangeburg awoke from its first slumbers to the sound of clanging bells, yelling of men and the hurrying of many feet. Here and there from houses all over the city there peered night capped heads of men and women. The sky at the center of the town was ablaze. Others were leaving their homes hurriedly donning their outer garments as they ran. The whole city was seething with excitement again.

"Come on. Fire down town," one rushing passerby urged to another. "Whole city's burning up," shouted others. Horse drawn and hand tub apparatus clanged or lumbered by. In a few minutes the entire square, scene of so many thrilling experiences, was packed with a slowly moving, jostling, excited mass, their faces reddened from reflection of the flames which were mounting to the sky

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and vieing, with the church steeple nearby, and which was threatened by the flying sparks.

“Courthouse on fire! Courthouse on fire!” back the words were hurled from mouth to mouth till all the city, white and black, seemed to be pouring into the center. Frantic efforts were being made to save records. Most of the recent ones were saved. The old historic building, however, that had stood for so many generations, and had been the scene of so many experiences from slave selling to murder trials, was doomed. As its cindered rafters and framework caved in, sending clouds of sparks into the sky, the old elm tree that had stood, like a companion to the courthouse for so many years and which had been used for the double lynching not long before, surrendered to the flames and was soon also a mass of burning embers. The limb from which the bodies had swung was the first to fall after the leaves. It drooped with a heavy crash, devoured by flames and sparks which seemingly had pounced on it like a mass of devouring, revenging insects.

The courthouse, being of inflammable material and being so old that it was a veritable tinderbox was almost completely consumed. As the last shower of sparks illuminated the air, two lone sentinels, who had been seated quietly on their mounts at the outskirts of the city on a slight elevation, turned the heads of their horses to the road, clicked to them, dug into their sides with stirrups then rode into the darkness. Neither spoke but both were satisfied with their work and assured that such records as they had viewed that day would never be again visible

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to mortal eyes. Daylight was breaking when Elvin Lauriston turned his horse into its stall and tramped wearily and despondently to his room. So exhausted was his body that he sank into deep slumber almost before his head touched the pillow.

CHAPTER XXXII

Truman and Lida were strolling, late in the afternoon, their plans for eloping having been delayed. The day had been lowery and threatening, with low banked clouds crossing the sky with swift menacing proportions from the south. Every cloud threatened a shower, thus keeping all except the lovers within doors. The trees seemed depressed with the heaviness of the atmosphere.

The two had been walking along the edge of the woods not far from the cave, when they decided to step out into the open to view the sky to see if rain still threatened. The sky was of a deep blue overcast. While from the south there came up these heavy clouds, also from the southwest there began to form and scud across the horizon, other lower, smoky clouds. The couple were now walking in the fields several hundred feet away from the woods, crossing the rows of corn.

From where they were they could see for several miles across fields of cotton, corn and wheat. In one direction there was a wide expanse of open farm land while almost directly opposite some two miles away was another copse where tall pines reared their heads proudly to the sky and sighed sadly to the wind. Below these, as if under their protecting wings were giant oaks, hickory and other trees with a southern profusion, with undergrowth nearer the ground.

Suddenly the two halted in their tracks and stood wonderingly at the low rumbling noise greeting their ears. It

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was like the roll of continued distant thunder. The wind, too, was beginning to freshen into a gale. Lida's hair blowing to the wind despite her efforts to control it. As they stood a jack rabbit bounded across their path on its way to a burrow in the furze near the edge of the woods. A squirrel followed closely behind, chattering in a frightened way, as it ran.

A flock of crows that had been feeding in a field nearby, flying in the wind, cawed excitedly as they passed. A pair of blue jays, also fluttered by. The rumble grew louder as the velocity of the wind increased and the trees began to sway far over as if to seemingly almost bend and snap. Unconsciously fear seemed to grip the hearts of the two as they stood helplessly looking from one to the other. They were just about to start back for the woods and the cave when from far across the woods to the south could be seen a funnel-shaped blue-black cloud, darker than those which formed a background to it.

This funnel-shaped cloud twisted and gyrated from one side to the other coming ominously on toward them. Truman's arm was about the waist of the girl while she leaned unconsciously toward him for protection. They gazed at the cloud as if entranced out of their wills. The gale was so fierce by this time that they scarcely kept their footing. Truman uttered but two words: "a cyclone." Into Lida's face there crept not fear but confidence.

Truman realized that to run for the woods would be to court danger of death from flying tree branches and

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limbs, for as they stood watching the cloud, huge branches of trees were twisted from the bodies of the tall pines and wrenched high up into the air. Great limbs of leaving oaks were tossed about after being torn away from their trunks as if they were so many feathers. Trees were falling, with the seeming ease of sticks that had lost their balance. The cyclone's action was enough to fill any soul with awe at its power. When he could take his eyes from the awe-inspiring sight, Bennet looked about for a place of safety. He knew that, could they remain stationary their best chances for life without injury would be to remain in the open. Yet who could withstand the force of that blow. They were now fighting to keep their balance and to prevent being blown away. They stood with difficulty.

In looking about him he discovered a tree stump of small size nearby. Toward this he maneuvered with the girl. They were almost blown past it by the wind. Truman managed to grip it, however, and placing his lips close to Lida's ears he shouted, "Lie down and clasp your arms about this stump. Hang on for dear life."

He was about to lie down by her side when he looked toward the woods they had left a short while before. His hair almost stood on ends. His eyes became wild. "My God," he cried. Lida looked in his direction and muttered one heart despairing word, "Daddy."

Unmindful of the danger which threatened him, Colonel Lauriston was walking at the edge of the woods, taking a step or two but to be blown back as he struggled in the

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grip of the storm, whose howling voice was like a dozen furies madly trying to bear him away. His hands were flying as if in defiance of the elements that raged about him. There was a wild look on his face. He raged and struggled, his mind completely gone.

As Truman looked at the old man, pity in his heart at the sight, he noted that there was a stump not very far from the edge of the woods to which if he could get the old man, his life would be saved. To shout a warning would not suffice since no human voice could carry above the roar and rumble of the cyclone which had reached almost the height of its fury by this time. He could not bear to think of the old man being carried away to a horrible death, crushed among the falling tree trunks and other *débris*. Colonel Lauriston had now grasped a bending sapling and was hanging on instinctively. Bennet leaned over to Lida and shouted, "Don't let go. Hold on. I'll save him."

As he released his grip on the stump he was blown so rapidly that he was almost forced out of the path of the old man. Like a man crossing a swiftly flowing stream, tacking at an angle to reach the other shore, Bennet struggled. At each stump, where he rested and regained his breath, he paused, to select another anchor toward which he would be blown and cling. At the third stump he failed to guide his way so that he was knocked against it with such force as to be almost stunned. Recovering himself he made another effort and this time was carried to the edge of the woods and to Colonel Lauriston. The lat-

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ter was still struggling and trying to stand to the wind. His hair was blowing straight back from his head, sand slashing his face and bringing tears to his eyes. He was raving incoherently.

Bennet reasoned that, since the wind was blowing across the woods, he would be fairly safe if he could make the stump not far away. Pausing to measure distances accurately, and to gauge the angle at which he would have to be carried by the stump he wanted to reach, after taking Colonel Lauriston by one hand, he stepped out and both were borne to the trunk of the tree. Colonel Lauriston lost his balance in the struggle and was half dragged, half blown across the distance. Bennet clinging to his hand.

Throwing the elder man to the ground, he fell prostrate across his body and grasped the stump, holding for dear life, at the same time locking his legs in a scissors grip about the elder man's body. He was not a moment too soon for the apex of the cyclone was upon them the next minute. The roar was deafening. Sand and dirt blew in blinding gusts. Truman felt his body lifted and pounded to the ground till it seemed he was breathless. Colonel Lauriston tried to rise, but Bennet forced him to lie prone by pressing his locked legs about the man's body.

Suddenly the fury of the storm abated. The cyclone had come and was gone. As soon as the fury was spent, Bennet released his grip on the old man and arose. He rushed to where Lida was still on the ground. She had swooned. Colonel Lauriston was now running around on

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all fours and barking like a dog. Running around the stump as if tied to it. Lida's hair, which had been blown loose was half buried in sand and dirt. Bennet tenderly lifted her to a sitting position and, with his handkerchief, began brushing the sand from her face and eyes. She was still unconscious. He shook her gently and called her name. Her head fell back in his arm displaying her well formed throat. There was sand between her lips. After a few moments she slowly opened her eyes then closed them. When she next opened them she was herself.

"Where's Daddy," she asked.

Truman kissed her tenderly. "My own," he said. "I should not have left you alone." She returned the caress, with:

"Never mind me. Did you save my Daddy?" She insisted.

"I saved him but I fear he will never know you again," Bennet explained sadly.

As he finished speaking, Truman started with Lida toward Colonel Lauriston who was still near the stump, though now standing, staring blankly toward the approaching pair. As she advanced Lida began to weep, pity at the plight of her father welling into her heart till she felt she could no longer bear the pain.

"Daddy, Dear Daddy. To think that life should bring us to this!" she murmured as she grasped his sanded hands and started to guide him away. He submitted as readily as a child, still muttering to himself. Bennet took the other hand and the two started toward the house,

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which by luck had not been blown over by the storm, being out of its direct path. They were within a quarter of a mile of the house when Lida realized the danger into which Bennet was running. Suddenly she paused, consternation at the thought, bringing a look of wildness to her face.

"Better not go any further, Truman," she said gently. "You'll be discovered if you do."

Bennet realized the truth of the words but asked, "Hadn't I better go a little further? Will you be able to manage?"

Lida indicated that she could. Darkness was now approaching and Bennet yielded. "I'll come to you as soon as possible tomorrow, Dear, and we'll leave tomorrow night. I'll have to make plans to see that Daddy will be cared for before I go."

"That will be all right, Lida," Bennet consented, and returned to his hiding place.

Elvin slept most of the day following his return home and was only awakened by the howl of the storm and the frightened noises of the animals in the barn, and the Negro hands, who gazed on the storm with awe, while at the same time huddled into a group, they mumbled prayers. He had given no thought to Lida or his father until he saw the couple coming out of the approaching darkness along the lane leading to the house. Without a word to his sister he assisted his father into the house and his room, where the servants soon had the old man prepared for bed while Lida caused hot drinks to be made and given him.

She was busy most of the morning of the following day

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securing medical attendance for Colonel Lauriston and making plans for his care. She and Elvin met but twice during the day and then spoke to each other only in monosyllables. At last plans were completed to her satisfaction and she started for the woods to meet Bennet. As she walked down the lane leading to the woods Elvin was looking from his window.

"Ah," he muttered in surmise. "She's not going into that woods for nothing. She's meeting him there, durn her. Well, she'll meet him the last time today." With that he turned into his room loaded his revolver and started to follow her. When he left the house Lida was now lost to view and he hunted in the woods some time before he discovered a trace of her.

Lida and Bennet had met and were walking at the edge of the forest planning their departure, unmindful of the menace stalking them down.

"Do you know, Truman, there are but two regrets that I have at leaving this place."

"I know you must love it, Lida Mine. — I know how you must feel. In a way I'm sorry to take you away. — It's your home."

"That's it. It is all the home I have known. How existence changes as we go through life. — Here's the spot that has known all my childhood joys and happiness — all my little troubles and cares and worries. Yet I'm leaving them — and willingly for—" she looked up tenderly at the young man at her side, then softly said — "you." As she spoke she pressed the arm to which she clung, a

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little more weightily. She looked out on the drab fields of cotton swaying in the gray day. "I shall miss you, land of my home, however many pains I have known here. I shall miss you beloved woodland, and most of all I shall miss my cave."

Bennet looked down at her, deeply touched. "Never mind, some day perhaps we'll come back and they will be glad to greet us."

"I hate to leave my father in the condition he is. And if your life were not in danger every moment you remained I wouldn't go away. I wonder if he'll ever recover and become reconciled?" Tears filled her eyes.

"Dear Daddy," she said. "I love you and am sorry."

"I'll wait, Lida Mine, while you nurse your father. I'll go away and wait, though I should miss you just as the falls would miss the water if the creek's path were turned away. I should be mighty lonesome. I'd go and wait though."

"I know you would, Truman. But I could not go on without you. Harm would come to me here. What would I do without you now? Heaven only knows what I'd have to endure once you're gone. — No, we must go. I'll have to leave Daddy to the care of the servants and his friends here for a while. Perhaps time will change things. No new land ever has the same reverence that a childhood home has. We must come back — sometime."

"We'll come back, as you wish, whenever you wish, Lida."

They walked along in silence for a few moments when

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suddenly Lida halted. Her breath stopped — her face blanched. Bennet turned to her alarmed.

“What is it? — What’s the matter. — Tell me. Quick.”

Before Lida could answer, Elvin Lauriston, eyes blazing with fury, his revolver raised and pointed at Bennet, stepped from behind a pine tree they were approaching, not ten feet away. Lida had seen him peering from behind the tree and had seen him raise the revolver. She prepared to throw herself in front of her lover. Bennet anticipated this and while the revolver was still raised and aimed at him stepped to the front of the girl holding her hand firmly so she could not make effort to save him, and — looked into eternity. He could feel the tremor of the girl’s hand in his and felt her breathing close to his arm.

“Needn’t pull her behind you. — I’m going to kill you both,” Elvin warned. Bennet still gazed from the nozzle of the revolver to Lauriston. “You coward,” Elvin continued. “You come down here where you’re not wanted and try to take my sister away from her people. Sneaking in like a snake in the grass.”

Bennet decided not to interrupt him, knowing that the longer Elvin talked the more time he would be given to map out a plan of action and the less likely Lauriston would be to shoot.

“Yes,” he continued, “we shoot snakes like you in cold blood. You thought to take my sister away. You thought to get yourself into our family. She could not see it. I’m going to spoil your little game. No sister of mine will ever marry a man of your blood.”

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"Don't you think you'll be hanged for such a crime?" Bennet asked.

"I hang, for killing you? Never. We don't do things that way down here. We can stand for black men down here for we can keep them in their places. For your kind, though, there's no sympathy. You're to damned fresh and uppish."

"I am a man the same as you."

"You can never be a white man."

"No, from what Lida tells me, neither can you.—Neither can you.—Neither can any of us. We're all of mixed blood."

Elvin winced at this. Bennet followed this up. "You called me a coward. It is you who'd play the coward to shoot down in cold blood a defenseless woman after you had shot the only one here to protect her."

"You protect her? Ha-ha-ha. That's a joke."

"Not so much of a joke as you think. It seems that you did not give her the protection and sympathy a brother should. You would have had her married off to one not to her liking, not to please her, but to please yourselves."

"That's a lie. It was to prevent her disgracing the name of Lauriston."

"Bennet is a name as much honored as yours."

"Not here. And we southerners stick together."

"Yes, even in murder. — Tell you what, though. I've no weapon with which to defend myself. I don't want any. You called me a coward. I'm going to see who's the coward. Here's a fair proposition. Shoot us down in cold

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blood or break your revolver, — throw the weapon away but put the cartridges in your pocket. If you can kill me by your hands I'll be willing to die. In that way you'll have a chance to show whether you're a coward or not. You're bigger than I."

"Ha — Lida's just fool enough to help you."

"I said man to man. Leave her out of it. She'll not harm a hair of your head. — Here's an open space. We'll fight till one of us is no longer able to leave. One of us will be left here dead. That's a man's way. Will you agree or will you prove to be a yellow coward?"

"Take off your coat. No man ever found me yellow yet," Elvin said, as he broke the revolver, removed the cartridges and threw the empty weapon away.

"Now you talk as I had always believed men talk," exclaimed Bennet.

Both men now began to strip. Lida clung to Bennet's arm as she began to cry softly. "Don't fight, Truman, over me. He'll maybe kill you. I don't want you to die. — I don't want you to die."

"There's no way out of it, Heart of Mine. If not this way then it would be death for both of us. There's no use asking for sympathy."

Elvin was hurrying with his preparations and was almost ready. "I'll give no quarter," he warned. "Each for himself, when I'm ready."

"Elvin," Lida spoke through her tears. "Is there not an iota of love in your heart. Must you persist in murder to satisfy your selfish pride. Can you not leave us to our-

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selves. Why interfere? I'm no longer a child. Think of the love we bore for each other as children. Think of the times we used to romp and play together. Never was there quarrel between brother and sister till now. These woods, these fields, we've roamed together, you and I, hand in hand, in the love that has been ours. Must it be death for me, for I will die if Truman is hurt; must it be death only that will satisfy you? Have you no heart? Are you all beast?" —

"Oh, shut up! If you're determined to marry this man then I'm determined to stop it. Even if I have to kill him first and then you. I was a fool to not shoot you both down. I'll get my hands on his throat, however, and choke the very life out of him. Then I'll attend to you. When a girl won't look out for herself it is for her blood relatives to look out for her."

Bennet had removed his collar and was in the act of removing the soft wool blouse he wore when Elvin finished, stripped to the waist, the muscles developed in his outdoor life and at college standing out in sinews of arms and shoulders, pinked into condition. Lida, after speaking, seeing that neither tears nor pleas would avail began to weep softly again when Bennet halted in his preparations to comfort her. Placing the free arm about the girl's waist, he drew her to him and whispered. "Never mind. I'll protect you. I have you and God on my side. We'll win."

"But he'll kill you. — He'll kill you. Then what will become of me. I'd rather die by your hands than by his." Bennet drew her to him and kissed her tenderly, still tug-

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ging to free his arm from the blouse. Elvin started toward the couple. Lida stepped into his path in front of Bennet and raised her hand.

"Stop!" she commanded. "I warn you, Elvin. I love you as a brother even though you do this monstrous thing. I love you, but if you kill him I'll kill you. I'll kill you," she panted hysterically.

For answer Elvin struck the girl a blow with the flat of his hand. "Get out of the way. You'll get hurt." The surprise of the blow as well as the pain sent Lida reeling and stumbling at the side till she fell sprawling on the pine needles.

"You dirty yellow dog!" Bennet exploded as he rushed in madness toward Elvin. "To strike your own sister down like that." The two men met in mighty primeval clinch, brute against brute. Between his teeth, after the first impact of blows exchanged, as they clinched, Bennet continued, "I did not intend to kill you but for that I'm going to throttle you as I would a raging dog."

The two men swayed back and forth around the open space each striving for a blow to advantage and each warding off ponderous swings then clinching and wrestling for mastery.

"Save your breath to cry for help," countered Elvin. "You'll need it, and get none."

They breathed in great explosive hisses and grunted as they tugged and struck out at each other and reeled over the spot. Elvin caught Bennet a terrific swing on the jaw in an unguarded moment as they came together and the

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latter retaliated with a body blow that sent the former sagging in the knees. They lost the semblance of men, their faces bleeding, and with their hair tousled, their eyes glaring like wild animals, they struggled and grunted. Once Bennet's foot slipped on the bed of pine needles and he almost went down. Elvin was over him in an instant gripping for the throat which was his objective. As he leaned over, Bennet, with a supreme effort twisted to one side and threw his adversary off balance for a moment. That instant, however, was enough for his purpose. He was on his feet quick as a flash, the grip which had been slowly coming closer and closer to his throat broken, and Elvin hurled several feet away.

While the two men were struggling, Lida regained consciousness and struggled to her feet to lean against a tree. She watched the two men, torn between two desires. She wished for her lover to win but prayed that the blood of her brother's death would not be on his hands. At the same time she agonized over the fear that her brother would be victor and she would see her lover die. She leaned against the tree, her eyes staring wildly at the two men, her features distorted by the agony she endured, of fear and hate combined, her fingers digging into the bark so ferociously that the nails were torn and bleeding. She could not scream. She could only stand transfixed with horror.

Bennet seemed to be tiring, and Elvin, gloating in the realization pressed for victory. Bennet's arms seemed to drop for a flash, from protecting his jaw. That flash was

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enough for Elvin, however. In that instant he swung a vicious bone-crushing blow to Bennet's chin. For just the hundredth part of a second the latter's eyes glazed. Lida saw the blow and uttered a half smothered scream of agony. Bennet heard this and came back to his senses. As he reeled from the blow, and Elvin tried to follow up his advantage, throwing caution to the wind, Bennet reached his hands up under his foe's arms and clutched at the throat. Elvin was trying for the same grip. As Bennet felt his fingers clutching Elvin's neck he gave a quick twist and pull, tripping his adversary over his knee. He fell atop Elvin, but for the moment could not stay on top. He clung to the throat, however. Elvin rolled over with Bennet beneath him. The latter's throat grip, however, was like that of a bull dog. Elvin gave over, for a moment trying to get Bennet's throat, but strove to break the grip by grasping both Bennet's hands and tearing them away from his windpipe. He was gasping for breath now. Bennet hung on for life. He wrapped both legs about those of his adversary and, still pressing tightly on the throat slowly rolled Elvin over till he was above again. He sat astride now slowly pressing, pressing his fingers further and further into the throat of his victim. Elvin tried futilely to shake off the grip. Bennet felt the body weakening. Elvin's face began to purple. As Bennet realized that he was victor and that Elvin was losing consciousness, he released his grip slightly.

"I don't want your blood on my hands," he panted, "or else I'd kill you cold as you planned to do me."

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Elvin's grip relaxed completely as he passed into unconsciousness. Bennet laid the hands over his head and began working them back and forth, as in the case of a drowning man. Lida stood still at the tree her body half bending over toward the pair transfixed in horror at what she was beholding. Bennet leaned over the prostrate form of his victim, slowly moving the arms back and forth at the same time pressing in and out with his knees at the sides of the man. After a few moments of this he listened at the heart. There were faint heart beats.

"Thank God," he breathed. "Thank God, I'm no murderer." He leaned over and listened again. The heart beats were stronger. "He'll live," he said aloud. At the words Lida came out of her trance of horror and fell prostrate on the ground again. The noise of her fall brought Bennet to his senses of her presence. He turned to her. "My God," he exclaimed.

"Lida, — Lida — Lida, Dear," he exclaimed as he rushed to her side, bent over and lifted her into his arms. "Lida, Lida." He shook her gently. "Lida — Lida, wake dear."

He shook her gently again and at the third time she opened her eyes.

"Truman, — Oh, Truman—You've killed him. —You've killed him."

"No," he said, lifting her to her feet. "Brace up. He's not dead."

"And to think that he tried to kill you. — It was horrible — horrible, horrible," she continued. "Are you sure he's not dead?" she asked.

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"His heart's beating," Bennet reassured her.

Bennet returned to the still prostrate and unconscious man, kneeled over and listened to his heart. "He'll live," he said. "His heart is stronger. We'll have to get away from here as quickly as possible. When he comes to there'll be no saving ourselves then. He'll not fight again, but kill us in cold blood. We'll have to go and go quickly."

CHAPTER XXXIII

Dusk was just creeping under the clouds as they left Elvin slowly breathing but still unconscious. "We'll have to get out of this land tonight dear. That's all. If he wakes and finds us still here, nothing will save us." Bennet gathered up his clothes and started toward the cave, half guiding, half carrying Lida in his arms. She was almost too weak to walk from the ordeal through which she had passed. By the time they reached the falls she had recovered, however.

Bennet prepared to wash the blood from his body and face. Lida was all tenderness now. "Let me do that. Let me do that. — Here, bend over."

Bennet leaned over the little stream as directed while Lida dipped the handkerchief he offered her into the water and tenderly laved his wounds. There were great scratches on his arms and body where Elvin's nails had dug in their effort to get a grip. His chin was swollen and bruised from the blows, landed there and his body was a mass of welts and blotches. An eye was almost closed. About the throat whole inches of flesh had been torn away. Lida closed her eyes from the sight as she carefully bathed and dressed them. That finished she said:

"I'll hurry home and get what things we need, and we'll have to get away in the darkness. — We'll have to use two horses."

"Where's the nearest minister?" Bennet asked. Lida blushed in the growing dark.

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"I don't know," she answered, — "Let's see."

"I met a Father Buntin, in Charleston," Bennet offered, who said he lived somewhere above Orangeburg. I don't sup — "

"Oh, yes. Father Buntin — Father Buntin. I know whom you mean. — I know him. He's down beyond Carter's, on the way into Orangeburg. — We can go there."

"There's where we'll go. I take you away from here as my wife. — The wife of my heart." He took her gently in his arms.

"Anywhere — Truman, with you."

"You'll never regret," he answered feelingly. "Hurry now," he urged as he freed her. "Hurry, we've no time to lose. I wish I had an automobile."

"Horses are better, Truman, in this country. The roads, you know are wretched, particularly after a rainstorm. I'll meet you at the edge of the clearing."

"Minutes become hours, dear, with you away," he said as he kissed her tenderly.

When she had departed Bennet climbed to the cave and quickly gathered what few things he had kept there and descended. Lida fairly flew to the house and bade Chloe have two horses brought to the front. While the maid was gone she hastily gathered what few treasures of her room she felt she could not leave, then descended. She started toward her father's room but as she approached she heard him singing incoherently and alternately cursing. She knew his mind was gone. Reverently she bowed at the door for an instant, uttered a prayer and was gone. As she

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opened the door she heard the horses stamping impatiently with surprise at being called upon on this dark rainy night. Quickly she mounted one and led the other to the place of meeting. Bennet was there to meet her. Without a word he mounted and the two started off at a trot into the dark, only the white ribbon of sandy road to guide them. As they started off, horses side by side, Lida reached over and placed her hand in his. He grasped it tenderly.

"Riding off into the dark with me, My Heart," he murmured.

She pressed his in return. "Not into the dark, but through the dark into light, Truman. For there's the light of tomorrow ahead."

"God keep it always light ahead," he prayed fervently.

Thus they traveled for more than two hours, sometimes pausing to listen to see if they were being followed. They heard nothing, however, save the screech of an owl from time to time as his slumbers were despoiled by the hoof sounds, or the bay of a distant hound. At last they reached Carter's. Lida knew the place by the wide stretch of garden in front of it and the scale house at the roadside where cotton and grain were weighed at the end of each day's harvest. Carter was known as the greatest grower of oats and wheat in the county.

"Father Buntin's church is not far from here, Dear."

"I hope he'll be in."

"He'll most likely be in on a night like this."

A few miles further on they passed the graveyard of

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the little country church. Back behind the cedars and juniper trees nestled the church with its parish house off to one side. They turned in at the gate. A light shone from the study. They rode straight to the door and Bennet dismounted. Lida remained on her mount. Bennet rapped at the door and soon there was a motion of activity seen from the reflection at the study window, followed by an opening of the door while Father Buntin, his gray hair showing under the edges of his study cap and his kindly benign eyes showing through his reading glasses peered into the darkness.

"Who's there?" he asked shading his eyes with a hand.

"It is I, Father. I've come to be married."

Father Buntin smiled broadly and genially as he said, "You can't marry here. You're alone."

Bennet laughed. "Oh, no, Father, I'm not alone."

"I usually marry couples not single men," Father Buntin continued, enjoying his joke.

"Oh, but I have the girl."

"Oh, but I don't see her," he mocked. "However, come in, come in!" Here he threw the door wide. Before Bennet could turn, Lida leaped from her horse and stood beside him. "Here am I, Father—the other part of the contract."

"Ah, daughter. It is well. I was just about to believe either the young man was having his joke with me or else he was under the influence of Luna."

"I'm under the influence of a far greater goddess, Father," Bennet offered looking at Lida who stood beside

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him in the doorway, touching his arm affectionately.

"Come in children. Come in." Father Buntin noted shrewdly the condition of Bennet's face and commented:

"Youth will ever fight for love, eh, Boy?" — So you're running away? — Well, you're both of age and know your own minds."

"Yes, Father, we love and want to marry," Bennet said simply.

"This is a serious step you take. Few young people realize nowadays how serious. They become enamored of a face or the eyes or some other feature and immediately believe themselves in love and want to rush to the altar. Love and marriage are serious things. They present serious problems both of the present and future. Have you considered all these things?"

"We have, Father." Father Buntin looked long and silently at Bennet. "If it were not for the difference in feature I should say I had met you somewhere. Let's see." He stroked his chin ministerially. "Ah —" he sighed. "I have it. Aren't you the young man I met at Charleston, with Dr. Tansey?"

Bennet nodded his head affirmatively. "That's it. — That's it. You're Mr. Bennet. — I sense it all now. You came down here to get a girl. Well, she seems well worth coming for — and fighting for," he added. "I take it you're eloping." Bennet nodded. "In that case you're in a hurry."

"Yes, Father."

"We'll lose no time then. Daughter, step this way. —

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Now join hands," he commanded as they stood side by side. The ceremony was soon over and the prayer pronounced. After both had shaken hands with the clergyman and started for the door, Father Buntin touched Bennet on the shoulder.

"You knew of the fate of poor Dr. Tansey, did you?" Bennet whirled.

"No, I hope to see him in the city."

"Well, you won't," Father Buntin said solemnly. "He's dead."

Father Buntin then gave Lida and Bennet a brief story of the events leading up to the killing of Dr. Tansey. "I only hope his death will have some effect on the people down here. It was a sad thing, my boy. My heart bleeds for the people here. Dr. Tansey was a brave outspoken man. An honest and a fearless man. Never will I forget the bravery he showed in challenging the attitude of the southerners toward their black neighbors. A good man has gone. Many more will go unless the people turn from their ways. Unless they get more of Christ in their hearts. Unless they live more the life of the Saviour."

"Dr. Tansey was a saintly man, and my friend," added Bennet.

"He was a saintly man. I tell you all the Godly men are not in the church. There are some great souls whose lives are the best sermons, and Dr. Tansey's was one of these. I think the people are beginning to feel remorse. If his death can but have the effect of putting more of God into the hearts of the people of this section and the

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seed be spread, then Dr. Tansey will not have died in vain. His death and my meeting with and knowing him, have given me courage to do my work here better, to be braver, and to look with more compassion on the black folk who are our neighbors. I'm going to try to make their lives easier and if possible establish a settlement house for them."

Lida, remembering her brother and the people on her own plantation grew worried lest they delay too long and her brother overtake them when he revived, pressed Bennet's arm to which she clung.

"Better be going, don't you think?" she warned.

"That's right," added Father Buntin. "Don't mind a garrulous old preacher. "There may be somebody after you. God bless you, my children. May your lives be happy and true to God." With that he closed the door and they were again in the dark. Bennet took Lida in his arms and in a long embrace. When they were disengaged, he uttered two words, "My wife." Lida stood on tiptoe and kissed him gently, the love of her heart in her lips. He lifted her to the saddle then mounted himself and they were off.

Scarcely had they left the district, riding away to the city, and Father Buntin had settled himself to a resumption of his studies when he heard wild horse's hoofs padding down the road as if racing. Father Buntin listened. The sound of hoofs came toward his door. He waited till they came to the very door when he heard the sound of someone dismounting. The visitor strode heavily to the door and pounded loudly.

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"Humph!" exclaimed Father Buntin, readjusting his glasses. "You're in too big a hurry. I'll just let you cool your heels." He turned to his reading again. Again the knocking, this time more forcibly. Father Buntin still paid no heed. A third time there was a loud knocking, this time accompanied by a smothered oath. Father Buntin arose and shuffled to the door.

"Come in! Come in! Don't wait. — Break the door in and enter."

Here he opened the door only to stand staring into the muzzle of a revolver. "Mercy me." He stepped back exclaiming, "What a fearsome boy. You play with a very dangerous toy. Very dangerous. Come in but leave your weapon outside. Leave that outside where you left your good manners."

It was Elvin Lauriston. He had revived sometime after being left, and after floundering about in the darkness bewildered, recalled the battle and hurried to the house to find Lida gone. He surmised they would hasten to the first minister to make sure of marriage, so he had ridden posthaste to Father Buntin, knowing him to be the nearest clergyman. He stepped into the little reception room as bidden, the revolver still pointing at the body of the minister,

"Where are they?" he demanded. "I know they came here. Where are they?"

"They who? Whom do you mean? Put that down or I won't talk to you at all."

"You'll talk or you'll never preach again. Kneel down and answer me."

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Father Buntin fingered the crucifix that hung at his breast. "I kneel to no one but God. And I'll kneel to no one with murder in his heart." He looked fearlessly and calmly into the eyes of the young man before him whose eyes were blazing with mad anger and lust for blood.

"Where are they? I'm going to kill them."

Father Buntin raised the crucifix till it was on level with the muzzle of the revolver, then looking past the eyes and into the very heart of the man before him, slowly and solemnly he uttered the words, "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not kill," he repeated slowly and deliberately, "Thou shalt not kill. — Don't hit him, Job!"

At that warning Elvin turned his head for the flash of a second and in that instant Father Buntin sprung to the boy, grabbed the revolver, pointed it toward the ceiling and wrenched it from Elvin's hand. He had acted so quickly, and Elvin was taken so unawares, that before he realized it he had been disarmed.

"Now you kneel," Father Buntin commanded. Elvin refused. "You'll kneel or take some of your own medicine. Kneel now." He held the revolver toward Elvin's body. Slowly the latter sank to his knees.

"It is so that God always triumphs," said Father Buntin. "God and right always win in the end."

"Now my boy, let Father Buntin read you a lesson. You have had murder in your heart for weeks, perhaps for a lifetime. Cast it out. If you live by violence you must die by violence. There is and has been altogether too much violence in this land. We are too quick to slay.

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Only the devil prompts a slayer. And one slaying begets another. The laws are immutable. We live by laws even when we break them.

"There is a law of good which creates goodness. There is a law of evil which spawns evil. An evil act begets an evil act though it be years in showing. It is said in the Commandments that the sins of the father are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Elvin thought of the courthouse records and of that one of his forbears that had brought evil upon his head. "Good law — right law, is right thought — thought rightly directed. Bad law is bad thought poorly directed. There is a law of recompense which we too often forget. We have forgotten it in this land of ours — in our treatment of those about us who are dependent upon us. This whole country will some day reap an evil harvest from the evil laws by which it has existed.

"There are laws of right and justice well thought out and laid down to direct our lives. Some were laid by Christ and his life; others by wise men who thought for humanity. By way of the law let us live. Let us live by way of the good law, the right law, the true law. Only then shall we know true real happiness. There is only one law that is supreme by which we should live."

Father Buntin paused here, stepped to Elvin whose head was now bowed, the evil in his heart soothed away with the calm, almost divine, talk of this man of God. Father Buntin laid his hand gently on the head of the young man bowed before him, raised his face toward heaven and said:

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"Love ye one another. Love is mankind's best creation and good will the most powerful friend. Hatred is the most destructive enemy. Let this reach your heart, it is the most beautiful and most enlightened form of self-interest and self-protection. It was that which made Christ die to save the world. Oh, my boy, my poor deluded, self-willed boy. Look up."

Elvin raised his head. Father Buntin held the Crucifix before him. "Wherever you go, hereafter, whatever be your fate, remember this symbol, and recall the words of Him who died for you, when he said, *'Love ye one another.'*"

Father Buntin reached over and gently raised the kneeling form to a standing position. Without a further word he handed the revolver back to Elvin and turned to his study.

Elvin stood for a few moments looking at the revolver, then at the light shining from the adjoining room. He stepped through the door, looked at the revolver for a few minutes, broke the breech, withdrew the cartridges, cast them to one side and the revolver to the other, he walked to the window and peered in. Father Buntin was kneeling at his table, his head bowed. Slowly Elvin sank to his knees. He wanted to pray but could frame no words. His mind reverted to the times when at his mother's knee he had knelt and slowly his lips framed the words, "Our Father, Who art in Heaven." He slowly repeated the Lord's prayer.

Elvin continued to kneel some moments after the prayer

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was ended, his mind still unsettled and his heart troubled. In his trouble the image of his father flashed into his mind. "Poor Father," he murmured. "He needs me. I must go." Slowly he stood erect in the darkness. After looking once more into the window through which he could still see Father Buntin kneeling, he turned toward his horse champing at the hitching post impatient to be free. After mounting he gave the animal free rein, and was soon in the road and headed back for home. His mind was heavy with the events of the past few days. Father Buntin's words still pounding in his ears and the crucifix dancing before his eyes.

"*Thou shalt not kill,*" he repeated reflectively. "Unto the children of the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto those that keep my commandments." — I never knew what that meant before. — We certainly heap up sins by our acts for those who come after us. — I wonder what more's in store for me?" It was almost daybreak when he again reached the Lauriston place. As his horse turned into the familiar drive he could see lights flashing back and forth from various rooms. An unusual circumstance. With an effort he dismissed his mood and spurred his horse into a trot.

One of the domestics heard the footsteps of the horse and hurried out to the veranda. Discerning Elvin as he mounted, who had started up the steps, the man said feelingly with tears in his eyes:

"Mr. Lauriston's gone, Suh — Gone. He's done kilt."

"Suicide," thought Elvin, recalling the state of mind of

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his father, a feeling of horror enveloping him. Before he could frame a question, however, as to details, the colored servant continued, apologetically. "I didn't mean to let him get outa my sight, Suh. But I went to git him a drink and when I cum back he's gone. I didn't mean to lef' him go, knowin' he ain't right," tapping his head to suggest bereft mind.

Elvin was still silent, his mind dazed at the calamity which overwhelmed him. The servant continued. "Next I hyeard a commotion out in the stables. The horses was a-trompin' and kickin' and neighin'. I go out theah and come to the stall of the big bay, who's making most of the fuss and under his feet is Mistuh Lauriston, daid. Oh, Lordy, trompled down by that horse." The domestic could say no more, his voice choked and tears began to flow freely.

"My God! What a horrible end." Again the words of the clergyman came to his ears, "unto the third and fourth generations." Elvin lifted his head to the sky. "Oh, God, help me," was all he could say. "It is more than I can bear."

As he uttered these words he felt the hand of the colored servant grasp his arm and pull him gently toward the door to enter. He removed it from his arm only to grasp it firmly in his hand. "William," he said. "Your heart is simpler than mine but it's also nobler. I'll never forget you. I'm going to treat you and your people like friends hereafter."

"Thass all right, Suh, — Thass all right. We all loves you, Suh, an' we'll stick by you. We'll tek care of you — an' Miss Lida."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Reaching Orangeburg about a half hour after sunrise, Bennet and Lida, unmindful of the tragedy behind them, stabled their horses then enquired their way to the little railroad station at the east end of the town. Once here, Bennet purchased tickets for New York and asked when the next train for Columbia and the North would leave. Informed that one would depart in half hour, Bennet sought a small lunchroom to which he was directed by the ticket agent, secured a lunch and reappeared.

He and Lida disposed of their hasty meal, the locomotive was heard at the lower end of the town. Bennet ushered her into the coach, disposed of their baggage and seated himself beside her. Lida watched the station agent, a thin-moustached, spare man of middle age ordering the baggage and mail placed aboard, then heard the locomotive puff itself into action. As the train left the station she leaned back in the coach, her heart saddened by the memory of her father whose image she could not force from her mind. At Columbia they sent a wire to Elvin telling where the horses had been stabled and directing that he call for them there.

"We're married," the message read. "And on our way abroad. Take care of father till I return."

Elvin fingered the message a long time when it reached him in the afternoon. His thoughts turned from the father whose body lay silent in the room, being prepared for burial, to his sister. "Life — death — pawns of fate,"

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he soliloquized. "We never know — we never know. — It's the way of the law." He still sat pondering, his hand hanging over the arm of the chair dangling the message when the buggy of Old John Marley came up the driveway.

"I fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh just heard the news, Ellie. Can I fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh help?"

"Come in. Come in, John — Poor Father, he's gone."

"Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh killed by his heedless daughter."

Elvin shook his head slowly and smiled faintly. "No, Uncle John. You can't blame her. The blame goes further back."

Old John, not understanding, merely shook his head lugubriously, at the same time adding, "Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh Women 're both fuh-tuh Heaven and Hell — fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh mostly hell, eh, Elvin? They'se no knowin' 'em."

"We make 'em so, I guess, Uncle John. — You wanted Lida to marry Young John, didn't you?"

"Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh she'll marry him now quicker'n ever. She'll need fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh someone to take care of her."

"No, she won't," Elvin retorted. "Not now. She's married," waving the message. "And she has my blessing."

"Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh what?" stammered Old John Marley. "Fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh, run away?" he asked, his huge jowls of jaws working spasmodically as he tried to frame the question.

Elvin merely bowed in assent.

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"I'll fuh-fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh be fuh-fuh-fuh-tuh durned," he replied as his face purpled with the news. "Fuh-tuh married and her daddy dead?" Disappointment was written all over the old man's face. His flabby fat became flabbier. He could say no more. He had come to offer condolences and aid. In his disappointment he tightened the reins and clucked to his horse then started off for home again.

Elvin looked at the retreating equipage and smiled but made no comment.

Bennet and Lida reached New York and were just about to leave the Pennsylvania Station for a hotel when they heard a little scream and turned in time to see Louise Comstock dropping her bags and running toward them, her face wreathed in smiles.

"Lida Lauriston!"

"Oh, Louise, You Darling. What are you doing here? — Of all things. My husband," she turned proudly to Bennet.

Louise Comstock flushed confusedly then recovered herself as she returned the hearty grasp of the hand outstretched to her. Bennet looked into her eyes and she saw there no resentment or ill will. She still held Bennet's hand as she took Lida's arm and drew the two close to her.

"I owe you two my apologies." Lida, understanding, reached her arm about the girl, but before she could say anything, Louise Comstock continued. "I did you a wrong, Mr. Bennet. — I hope you'll forgive me, if you can. I don't see how you can —." Bennet tried to interrupt.

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"No — no — no — don't interrupt me. You don't know how sorry I've been — how sorry. — I'm glad you're married and I'm glad Lida is the girl. I've learned a lot since I saw you last. I've learned that prejudices we hold are wrong. I've decided to try and right some of those wrongs. I saw some horrible things in the South; things I was ashamed of; things America ought to be ashamed of; things America will be ashamed of some of these days.

"Professor Armstrong —"

"Oh, Professor Armstrong? Is he up here too?" Bennet interrupted.

"Yes; after Dr. Tansey's awful death — You heard about that?" she rattled on. "No? — He died, killed in a mob — trampled on as he and Professor Armstrong tried to prevent two innocent persons from being lynched. They failed — Oh, it was horrible — horrible. Professor Armstrong was so shocked at the conditions that he has decided to devote his life to changing conditions. — I'm going to help him. The South is wrong — wrong — wrong.

"Professor Armstrong is going to start settlement work in the South and try to get the white South to help better the conditions. By bettering conditions of the colored people, which is their duty, they will better their own. It's a glorious work. — I was just on my way down to meet him now. Congratulations and may your lives be full of happiness. Lida, I adore you." She kissed Lida heartily. — "On your honeymoon? Well, good luck to you. I'm awfully glad you're married."

"We were just on our way to book passage for England," Bennet explained.

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"How wonderful! A honeymoon abroad. Oh, Goody."

"Take Professor Armstrong and bring him over."

Louise dropped her head but said nothing. There was a suspicious bulge on a finger of her left hand, however, which both Bennet and Lida noticed. A handshake for Bennet and a kiss for Lida and the girl was gone. Bennet and Lida lost no time getting to a hotel and making arrangements for their trip abroad.

As they passed the Statue of Liberty, Lida and Bennet were standing on the afterdeck with a group watching the shores of America fade from view. All the fellow voyagers were waving handkerchiefs, or blowing kisses to their native land and the image of Miss Columbia. Bennet, hat in hand, stood facing the statue, a peculiar tug at his heart. He looked to see how Lida was affected. She was still, but not looking toward the statue at all. He was surprised.

"Aren't you going to say good-bye to Columbia?"

"No, why should I? Look how much trouble she's made for us?"

Bennet shook his head as, before all the group, he took his wife gently in his arms. "You shouldn't say that, Dear. Matters not what troubles we have, this is our country — our birthplace — our native land. However, cruel and hurtful, it is our land just the same." He folded her in his arms.

THE END

