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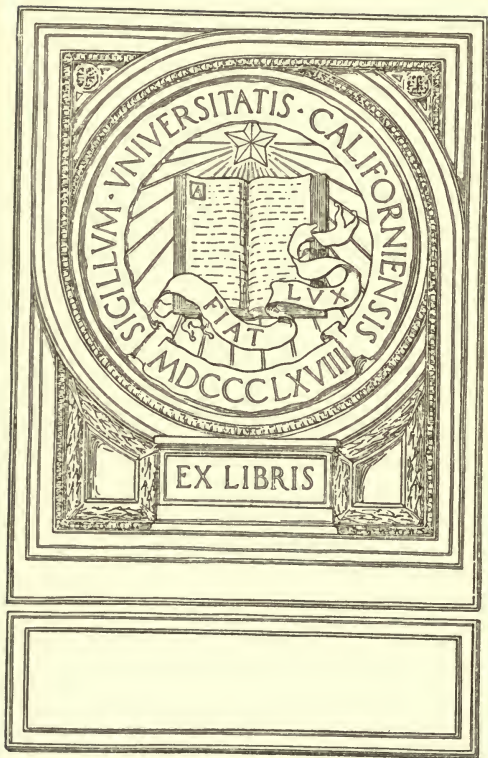


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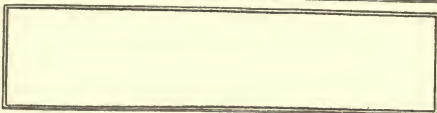
# DOWN'S AND HIS LIKES

RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON





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EDITED BY ARTHUR STEDMAN

MR. BILLY DOWNS AND HIS LIKES

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“Proceeding thence to one of the trees near the gate, he alighted, hitched his beast, and, opening the gate, advanced modestly up the walk.”—Page 53.

MR. BILLY DOWNS  
AND HIS LIKES

BY

RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON

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EDITOR'S NOTE  
TO THE  
TENTH VOLUME OF THE SERIES

*Courteous Reader.*—In our ramble along what might be called the literary lane of this Series, your cicerone may justly claim that his efforts at entertainment have been fairly successful. Starting with a merry “God-speed” from the prince of humorists, we soon found ourselves in the lively company of the prince of canoeists and his energetic young Kaiser. Mr. Bigelow’s championship of a sovereign little understood in this country has proved effective, while his enthusiastic description of his romantic journey *Down the Danube* lightened many an hour of our way. Did not we also take part in those inspiring Hungarian dances, and foregather with the noble Lajos—or was it merely the listeners’ fancy which made it seem so? Yet we were not allowed to forget that all this joyous living is but a peace in war, likely to be invaded at any moment by the hoarse growling of the Russian bear.

From such scenes of life and action it was restful to turn aside for an interval to the rock tomb of Walt

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Whitman. There we read to each other, not "sad stories of the death of kings," but the old bard's rhythmic self-personifications of Nature and Mankind, and his triumphant chantings of the future of These States. Then with lowered voices we follow him through many a hospital ward, the while he ministered to the spiritual and temporal wants of a nation's heroes.

Anon we resumed our walk, this time among a group of sunny-hearted Calabrian peasants. Strange, was it not, that we should understand their speech, while they seemingly chattered away in "that soft bastard Latin?" But the magic touch of their creator gave us the illusion as well as that too brief vision of iridescent Princess Humming-Bird.

Who is the quiet-looking fellow who joins us as the Italian voices die away in the distance; and how should we suspect that *he* would thrill us with that weird story of Rayel, the mind-reader? And further to pique our curiosity, he will not tell us whether it lies in the domain of fact, or in that of fancy.

Very plainly in the domain of fact is the discourse of our next companion, the man of scholarly brow and cheerful manner. Out of his wide store of learning he tells us of a Genoese, the Christ Bearer—whose high purpose has been so fruitlessly questioned of late—and points his story with the words of the Genoese himself, convincing us by their steadfast sincerity.

And now we chance upon a sovereign princess of

“ That proud and humble . . . Gypsy Land ”—

one of the very elect of Bohemia. Most graciously are we permitted to form a group while she talks of our friends, the books, and of how we may cherish their friendship most worthily. With gentle satire or sparkling epigram, she brushes aside the fads and fallacies of this literary *fin de siècle*, calling upon us to return to the sane and simple ways of the masters.

So we reach the tenth milestone of our ramble, and while we are resting by the wayside let us hail the gentleman who is approaching, and ask him for “ another story.” We who have heard him before know that he seldom fails to respond to such a request, and always, too, in a manner quite inimitable. As he comes nearer you may observe the dignified yet courteous and kindly bearing of a gentleman of the old school. The white hair and moustache, the sober dress, betoken the veteran, although they are almost contradicted by brilliant eyes and an innate youthfulness in word and thought. It is not difficult to recognize, in Col. Richard Malcolm Johnston, the founder of a school of fiction and the dean of Southern men of letters.

ARTHUR STEDMAN.

Century Club, New York,

Oct. 21, 1892.



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The editor of this Series desires to express his sincere thanks for assistance received from Mr. Scudder of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Mr. Gilder of the *Century*, Dr. Ward of the *Independent*, and Dr. Mabie of the *Christian Union*. In the present volume special acknowledgment is due Messrs. Harper & Brothers for the use of the story entitled "Two Administrations."



# MR. BILLY DOWNS AND HIS LIKES

## A BACHELOR'S COUNSELINGS

“ The meek will he guide in judgment ”

### I

CURIOUS is the inequality often noticed in human friendships. Indeed, as a rule, the most devoted seem to exist between unequals, superiors submitting complacently to be loved, indulged and waited on, inferiors content to submit and serve—sometimes even thankful to do so. How uncomplainingly Theseus accepted the love and sacrifices of Pirithoüs ! How touching to David the devotion of Jonathan, “ passing the love of women ” !

Of a kind similar, although upon a lower

plane, were the loves of Jones Kindrick, the greater, and Simeon Newsome, the less. Four miles south of our village, at the crossing of the county-seat road by one leading from the west toward Ivy's Bridge on the Ogeechee River, dwelt the Newsomes. Their large, square mansion kept within plenty of good things for their enjoyment, and that of others who came there with or without special invitation. A mile and a half east, near the road last mentioned, in a dwelling somewhat smaller but whiter, lived the Kindricks. The heads of these families had died some years before, and their widows, who were cousins, had been managing the estates well during the time it took the boys to grow old enough for such responsibilities. As for Sim (nobody except his mother ever called him Simeon), as long as he had been anything he had been as steady as any clock. He seldom laughed, except when politeness so required. Not that he was morose; it was only that he rarely saw or heard things which to him seemed worthy of laughing about. He had tried to take to schooling



with the fondness desired by his parents, but while in the midst of demonstrative and other adjective pronouns in the forenoons, and of tare and tret and the double rule of three in the afternoons, not seeing his way clear he pleaded fatigue, after such fruitless endeavors, and begged of his father to be let go to plowing.

A set-off to Sim's humility was the pride he felt in the abilities of his cousin Jones, a year older than himself. This had been going on from childhood until now, when each had reached his majority. While at school Sim was looked upon as better than Jones in little things like spelling and reading, for which Jones expressed contempt that had much influence upon Sim's imagination of his greatness. This was exalted higher when Sim broke down, and Jones, misliking the plow, with which he had been threatened, dashed forward and got along whether or no, cajoling where he could not delay to conquer, hopping over where he could not cajole, or, with connivance of the master (who liked not to lose a good-paying scholar), slipped through behind others who

had opened the way for themselves, and always looked and talked like one who was moving from victory to victory. In time he had acquired a stock of words, many of them new, which filled Sim with admiration not less fond than awful. Of middle height, brown, brawny, solemn-faced, he never felt a pulsation of envy when he looked at the tall, slender, fair, ever-smiling Jones.

It went on thus after they had taken control of the plantations. Sim's sense of inferiority ought to have subsided when it appeared how much better he understood and conducted business; but knowing that the soul of Jones was too high to let itself be entirely engrossed in mere agriculture, he was pleased when the latter from time to time let him offer counsel—and followed it.

For a time Jones had been circulating himself and his vocabulary among the girls, and his mother and his sister Maria, the latter two years older than himself, plain of feature, sensible of mind and industrious of body, wished that he would get married and settle down to

steady work. He let them urge, and answered that his matrimonial cogitations had not yet come to a head.

“Yes,” said his mother one day, “you think you must be a mighty picker and chooser; and if you don’t look out you’ll go clean through the woods and then have to be satisfied with a crooked stick. If you only knew it, S’phrony Miller is the girl for you—that is, if you could get her.”

“As for the ability of sophisticating S’phrony Miller into the chains of mattermony, ma, I—no; perhaps I oughtn’t to use the words.”

“I wouldn’t if I were in your place,” said Miss Maria. “It would be a good thing for you to get S’phrony, if you could. If you’d marry, Cousin Sim would. I really believe he’s waiting to see when you are going to settle before starting out himself, intending to keep himself entirely out of your way.”

“Sim! He’s a dear good fellow, isn’t he? I wish Sim had a better gift of languages; but—oh, old Sim will get on well enough, I hope. As for me and myself, you and ma, and, I may

say, all other ladies, ha ! ha ! will have to wait till my mind comes to judgment."

"I say *judgment!*" retorted his mother, probably not knowing herself precisely all that she intended to convey by the remark.

It was different with Sim. Having reached manhood safely, soundly and honorably, it began to occur to him that it might be a good thing to get a wife. He had been too busy to go about much, and it was only when riding to Horeb meeting-house and back again—sometimes perhaps during a long sermon within—that he had begun to throw, with moderately heightened interest, speculative eyes among the pretty girls who were there in such profusion. Then his observations of the life led by Mr. Billy Downs, the most respectable old bachelor among his acquaintances, backed by numerous kind admonitions bestowed upon him by the latter, were leading gradually to the decision that, on the whole, married life was preferable to single, when one took the pains to study their several promises of results, general and special.

## II

NOW when, with this thought on his mind, Sim next went to the Millers', whose place joined both the Newsomes' and the Kindricks', and looked at S'phrony from his new point of view, he felt that he was content to rest there. S'phrony, who was a tall, rather blonde, pensivish, sweet-looking girl, and her young sister were the only offspring of their parents. Their dwelling was yet smaller than the Kindricks', but whiter, and more shrubby in the yard than in both the other places put together. If the plantation had less acreage, the land was fresher, and it would not have been easy to say of the two sides, one adjoining the Newsomes' and the other the Kindricks', which was the better.

When S'phrony noticed that the remarks lately made by Sim at the house, although not numerous, seemed to have been intended mainly for herself, she felt the interest usually rising on such occasions, and from that time her talk, the way she dressed, the increased per-

fume of flowers, and one thing and another about the room, the non-appearing of her sister and parents when he called, all tended to confirm him in the thought that he was attempting what, if successful, would be a good and sensible thing.

Mr. Billy Downs, between whom and himself was an intimacy which, on the part of the former, was warmly fond, urged him to be as quiet as possible, but correspondingly speedy. The reasons for his advice he had sufficient grounds for not fully disclosing. Yet Sim's instincts convinced him that it was good, and at his fourth visit he was not far from putting to S'phrony a question as pointed as he knew how to frame it. He fully resolved that he would do so at the next, and but for one thing this would have been done. That thing—not meaning, by use of such a word, to be openly offensive to his memory—was Jones Kindrick. For—don't you know?—no sooner had he found that Sim was going to the Millers' in suspicious circumstances, than he went to running there himself. More than that, he made

it his business to come over to the Newsomes', and, not finding Sim at the house, to follow him out to the very field where he was overseeing the hands. When he found him, thousands upon thousands of words were used by him, of which I shall here put down a few:

“Ma and sister Maria have been for some time past specified. They have both been going on to me about S'phrony Miller in a way and to an extent that in some circumstances might be called even obstropulous; and to quiet their conscience, I've begun a kind of a visitation over there, and my mind has arriv at the conclusion that she's a good, nice piece of flesh, to use the expressions of a man of the world and society. What do you think, Sim, of the matter under consideration, and what would you advise? I like to have your advice sometimes, and I'd like to know what it would be under all the circumstances and appurtenances of a case which, as it stands, it seems to have, and it isn't worth while to conceal the fact that it *does* have, a tremendous amount of immense responsibility to all

parties, especially to the undersigned, referring, as is well known in books and newspaper advertisements, to myself. What would you say to the above, Sim, in all its parts and parties ? ”

It was fortunate for Sim that his hopes had not been lifted so high that their sudden fall would be too extremely painful. Through the hints of Mr. Downs he had been feeling some apprehension as to what Jones might do when he heard of his visits to S'phrony, and he held his feelings in restraint. He now drew a long breath, the significance of which was lost upon his cousin; then answered:

“ I didn't—that is, I never quite got all your languages, Jones; but my opinion of S'phrony is, that she's the equil of—I may say—yes, of any of'em. Ahem ! ”

“ Your advice then, Sim, is not to the contrary, in all the circumstances ? ”

“ You mean — is it your meaning to the courting of S'phrony, Jones ? ”

“ You may say words to that effect, for the sake of the whole argyment.”



“My advice,” answered Sim, after swallowing the air that had accumulated in his mouth — “my advice would be to *anybody* — that is, I mean any *marryin’* man — that *wanted* S’phrony, if I was asked for my advice, I should give it to git S’phrony if he can. I have no hizitation about that, nor not a doubt.”

“Of course, Sim, in an affair magnified as we are on now, your opinion is worth more than ma’s and sister Maria’s both put together, although it’s a satisfaction that, as the case now stands, you colide with ’em perfect. I have not yet represented to S’phrony any open remarks; but I have insinooated a few pleasant words to her, and her looks on those occasions were that she were expecting more of the same sort; and now, since I’ve had this highly interesting conversation with you, I rather think I shall govern myself according. Still, there can be no doubt, I don’t suppose, but what the future is before us, just like the past is behind us, and I can’t but thank you for your kind remarks, so entire coliding with ma and sister Maria.”

Brave man was Simeon Newsome, and in most things self-reliant enough; but he believed that he knew perfectly well that nothing could be more vain than for such as he to essay to rival a man of such vast sentiments and such boundless powers of expression. Never had Jones appeared so great before his eyes, what time he could take them off the ground and look up his full length. In his mind he bade S'phrony Miller farewell, except as a prospective cousin, and when Jones, after oceans of other words, went away, he tried to go to thinking about something else. The long habit of submission to his superior, and somewhat of the old gratification of seeing him an easy leader in movements of his genius and inclination, soon induced a condition of moderate resignation. Had it not been so with Piri-thoüs after the success of the joint endeavors of Theseus and himself in that first "rape of Helen" in the temple of Diana Orthia? Did he not foresee that the lots cast for her would fall to the greater? As far back as that one understood well enough how such things go,

and so, uncomplaining, even congratulatory, the subordinate went away to seek the less fair Kore among the Molossians.

Far less content with the condition of things was Mr. Billy Downs. A brief description must serve for the outside of him. He was a rather small, grizzly, thin, but wiry gentleman, somewhere between forty-five and fifty. He lived in a double log house a mile nearer the village than the Newsomes. He could have afforded to put up a far better mansion, making and laying up as he had been doing for the last twenty-five years. Everybody liked him, and he liked everybody except Jones Kindrick; but this exception was because he loved Sim Newsome better than anybody else. According to neighborhood tradition, Mr. Downs had reason to feel peculiar tenderness for Sim. In his youth he had wanted, and in his unskilful way had tried to get, Sim's mother when she was Miss Fortner. Failing in this, he drew himself in, and stayed there until this son had grown old enough to make acquaintance beyond the domestic circle, since when, notably since the

death of Mr. Newsome, he had been indulging for him a feeling somewhat like parental, and it grieved him to see that he was rather dwarfed by his admitted inferiority to Jones Kindrick. The process of affiliation was slow, because Mr. Downs seldom went to the house in Mr. Newsome's lifetime, and after his death, from feelings of delicacy, never. When this good man saw how things had gone in the matter of S'phrony Miller, he decided to throw out a few words, holding back others to a later day. Using a name fonder than that by which Sim was commonly addressed, he said:

“ Simyul, if it have been me, when I see Jones abeginnin' to use over there at the Millers' with his striped kervats and them dictionary words, that was above my inf'mation, I should have done like you and drawed in my horns. You ain't the pushin' feller Jones Kindrick is, and my expe'unce is, it take pushin' with female young women to make much headway among 'em. I did hope it were yourn and S'phrony's lot, because she's a fine young woman. But it seem like it weren't; special as Jones is a

kind of a cousin, and have always let you give up to him, which people says he oughtn't to—that is, everlastin'. But now, Simyul, if it was me, *I* should spread out, and maybe git up a still-hunt outside o' Jones's range, and see what's to come of him and S'phrony. For two things is absolute certain. One of 'em is, S'phrony ain't the onlest girl in the State o' Georgy, and the other is, they ain't no tellin' the final upshot of her and Jones, *and*—well, if it was me, I should peeruse around at conven'ent times, and maybe ride over t'other side the river—we'll say up, in, and along there about Williams Creek meetin'-house, where Jes Vinson live, and he have a big plantation and a daughter besides. But I should make a still-hunt if it was me, because they ain't any countin' on Jones, and special when he see you a likely to git ahead of him. Of course I got nothin' ag'inst Jones Kindrick, only I *do* wish that Jones Kindrick could git to understand that he ain't to have *every* girl in the whole State, and special them that he see you abuckin' up to."

Upon these words, apparently wise and evidently forbearing, Sim felt that he ought at least thoughtfully to ponder.

### III

ON a Saturday not long afterward, as Mr. Jesse Vinson, one of the deacons, was listening with subdued attention to the sermon then being delivered by the pastor of Williams Creek meeting-house, he observed a young man come in softly, take a seat decorously, and with proper solemnity keep his eyes on the preacher during the remainder of the discourse. When a recess was taken prior to the meeting of the regular conference, Mr. Vinson, having learned that the stranger was the son of his old friend and church brother, Eli Newsome, asked if he would go and spend the night with him. Sim naturally answered yes. Arrived at the Vinson mansion, a respectable brick two-story, a mile away, he found, as Mr. Downs had said, that a young girl was there, and that she was not unlike S'phrony Miller, only taller, dressier, and more chatty. With such a girl a bashful young

man can make his way more easily than with one like himself. Alley Vinson kindly led him along paths which she discovered he could tread with least embarrassment. When he went to bed that night, he felt that perhaps he had done well by venturing there. So he felt next morning on the way to meeting, and so when the congregation was dispersing, and he bade her good-by, and thanked her for the invitation to come again.

I don't remember if it was ever known positively how Jones Kindrick found out that Sim had been to Williams Creek: but Mr. Billy Downs afterward said that he was glad of it, although he never admitted that he had contributed anything leading to the information. At all events, at the next meeting-day at Horeb, two weeks thereafter, Jones hardly more than spoke to Sim, and the latter was surprised, after the people were going back home, to see nobody in this wide world riding along with S'phrony but her father and sister, and S'phrony all the while looking as if she felt as lonesome as she could be. Mr. Downs and Sim traveled

along together. The former was as punctual at religious services as the very deacons. Conscious of being a bachelor and a sinner, and therefore unmeet for the kingdom of heaven, he had never applied for membership, but he hoped, by the use of other outward means, to make his case as mild as possible at the final judgment, which naturally he hoped would be put off as long as possible.

“It look like a onlucky accident, Simyul, but my hopes is it'll turn out for the best. Jones have a evident a struck on to your trail acrost the river; and now look at him yonder among them men, awavin' of his tongue and the balance o' hisself, and S'phrony along of her pa and her sister by her lone self. Some-thin's up betwix' him and her; and if it was me, I shouldn't go to no Williams Creek next meetin'-day, but I should wait to see where the cat's goin' to jump.”

“I've done made up my mind that I ain't a-goin' there for yet a while.”

“Of course you ain't; I knewed all the time you weren't. Now, if it was me, I should feel



like givin' my horse a cut and gallopin' up, and sidlin' in there by S'phrony, betwix' her and her pa; but I don't think I'd do it quite yit a while, so public like that, when her feelin's has been hurted, that is, provided she have 'em for Jones, which I always can *not* but has had my doubts, and special now when he's a open neglectin' of her in that kind o' style. And if it was me, I should let Jones have all the rope he want."

Other talk they had on the way. Mr. Downs had not command of what he called Jones Kindrick's dictionary words, but when he felt like it, he could be equally voluminous. Stammering had been the language in which the single love of his youth had been conveyed, but now in the romance of this young man whom his imagination had adopted for a son, uncertain, unfixed though it was, he felt an interest equal to that of the most impassioned lover.

Mr. Downs had wished heartily for Sim to marry S'phrony. In his mild way often he had remonstrated with him for his habitual yielding

to Jones. Sim had listened to his praise without objecting; for to the humblest as to the vainest sweet are the panegyrics of a friend. Yet it would have been too painful, therefore it was not possible, to part from the exalted estimate that he had had of Jones all his life. Mr. Downs recognized this; and therefore instead of blaming, he seemed rather to ratify his withdrawal from his little stage when Jones with his paraphernalia of every sort stepped upon the boards. It was for this also that he sent Sim upon the expedition across the river. He believed that Alley Vinson would be an entirely safe investment, yet the main motive was to excite in Jones curiosity first, and afterward jealousy, and so lead him away from the Millers'. He believed now that he had succeeded. His last words to Sim were:

“You lay low, Simyul; keep alayin' low as you can git. They ain't no tellin' what Jones'll do, nor what he won't do. But one thing is certain: Jones Kindrick can't do *everything*, a-includin' the marryin' of everybody. You may stick a pin right there among them words.”

He rode on home, his mind occupied with all the wistful thoughts and the sweet thoughts of a true lover    Bless his old heart!

## IV

AMONG the rural folk of that generation courtships and espousals were for the most part brief. Of the two, Sim and Jones, Alley's father liked better the former; but Sim, acting on the counsel of Mr. Downs, was lying low on his side of the river, and perhaps Alley felt a tiff for such neglect. At all events, about two months afterward, Jones went over there in the family carriage, and brought her back with him to stay.

It was pleasant to see Mr. Downs when Jones was taken out of all rival possibilities with his dear Simyul.

“Simyul, it have come egzact as I wanted. Now you can come out and breathe the a'r free. And now you got the whole S'phrony Miller field before you, and if it was me I should go in, and I should go in speedy, and I should go in bold.”

Sim began at once to feel like a new man, and congratulated himself for following the salutary counsels of Mr. Downs. On the very next meeting-day S'phrony seemed to him nicer and sweeter than ever before. There was a merriness not habitual in her face and in her words when, after the start home, she referred to the new couple.

"Jones and his bride looked quite cozy and bright. Didn't you think so, Sim?"

"Well, yes. Jones special looked very comfortable. I'm glad he's located at last."

"So am I."

"You? I—I'm glad to hear it, S'phrony."

"What for?"

"Because I—I didn't know exactly how you and Jones stood."

"Stood? Why, we stood always as we're standing now. What do you mean?"

"I—fact is, S'phrony, I thought Jones been awantin' of *you*."

"I hope you haven't been thinking that I wanted Jones."

She looked at him in mild, smiling reproach,

and her lips were so red and her teeth so white that Sim was thankful that they did not and now never could belong to Jones.

"I didn't know—why, of course I didn't know, S'phrony."

"I knew you didn't. I suppose you didn't care."

"Oh, yes, I did; yes, I did."

"And suppose you had known that I didn't, then what?"

"Why, I should have put in then myself, right straight, like I wanted to do, and was agoin' to do when I see Jones acomin' and—and—and abarkin' up the same tree."

Her laugh, unused as she was to great hilarity, rang loud.

"I—I declare I'm glad to hear it, that I was mistakened."

"Did I say you were mistaken?"

"No; but you laughed, which go to show that you ain't been apesterin' your mind about Jones."

"No, indeed; I never put in any sort of bid for Jones Kindrick. You always set a higher

value on your cousin Jones than anybody else did—except Alley Vinson.”

“And I’m mighty glad she done it. Because,” he said almost fretfully—“because ever since my mind been in a condition to want anybody for myself, I been awantin’ of you.”

“Why, then, didn’t you come out like a man and tell me so?”

“It were because Jones—law me, S’phrony, I done told you about Jones.”

“And then you thought you’d go over to the Vinsons’.”

She looked at him searchingly.

“It were Uncle Billy Downs sent me over there.”

“For what?”

“Well, Uncle Billy say that it might sagashuate Jones away from you.”

“What in this world is that? *Sagashuate!* That word’s beyond me.”

“It were Uncle Billy’s word. He meant that Jones would be for puttin’ out my tracks over there, like he put ’em out over here. If I had have knew that Jones had called off from

you, I declare on my word and honor, S'phrony, I'd never went nigh there."

"Suppose you had thought that Jones jilted me, what would you have done then?"

"I'd 'a' come at you the same, S'phrony, jes' the same."

"Then I say, bless your heart, and Mr. Downs's too."

"I 'm glad to hear it."

He looked at her wistfully, and said not another word.

"Well?" at length she inquired.

"I—I got no more to say, but, soon as Jones were off the track for good, Uncle Billy and me we made up our minds for me to court you."

"Well, why don't you?"

"Ain't I been atryin' to do it, S'phrony, ever sence we left the meetin'-house?"

"Oh! now I think I understand you. What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to say yes, and then, waitin' like I been adoin', I don't want you to put it off too fur."

“Well, sir, I’ll tell you now plain, Sim Newsome, that there is n’t a man living that I would get married to inside of two months, and you needn’t to ask me.”

“Let me see; that would fetch it to middle of December. That’ll suit me, S’phrony; it’ll come in nice for Christmas.”

“Laws help my heart, Sim! You talk like I was a piece of pound-cake, or a tumbler of sillibub.”

“No comparison to them, S’phrony; not to a whole oven full o’ pound-cake, nor a whole stand o’ sillibub.”

“Hush! And now let me tell you one thing, my young man. If I am to marry you, you have got to quit letting Jones Kindrick top you in every everlasting thing. I have been mad many a time to see how he has run over you, when you were worth ten times as much. Do you hear me?”

“I hear every word you say, S’phrony. Betwix’ me and you and Uncle Billy Downs, I know Jones can be made to—to shinny on his own side.”



“ No, sir; *I* shall have nothing to do with it; and your uncle Billy Downs, as you call him, shall have nothing to do with it. If you can't keep yourself on a level with Jones Kindrick, I'll—I think we'd just as well drop it, and go to talking about something else. It's right cool to-day, don't you think so, for the middle of October ? ”

“ S'phrony, please don't go to drappin' all my feelin's down on the very ground, talkin' about the weather ! I hain't been *astudyin'* about the weather, nor thinkin' nor keerin' one single continental whether it's cool or hot. I oughtn't to brought in you and Uncle Billy, and if you say so, the first time I ketch Jones Kindrick out of his house, I'll whirl in on him and maul some of his big languages out of him. S'phrony, please take back what you said about the weather, won't you ? ”

She looked at him affectionately, and said:

“ My dear Sim, I'm not afraid that you won't assert your manhood. I take back all I said about the weather, and everything else that hurt you.”

“I’m glad to hear it. I hain’t never been *afraid* of Jones. It’s his big languages which I never learnt that has made me keep out of his way. Jones know I can outfarm him, out-run him, fling him down, and can whip him, if it come to that; and now, since I find you don’t like my givin’ up to him, which ma and Uncle Billy has always ruther scolded me for doin’, he better keep *some* of his languages to himself, for me.”

“There’ll be no need of any fussing. Jones will see that hereafter you intend to be your own man, and that will be all that is needed.”

“I’m glad to hear it.”

“Is that all you have to say? If it had been Jones, he would have used some of his biggest words in saying what sort of wife I’d make.”

“Confound Jones!”

## V

IT is a goodly sight, the influence of a good woman on a husband who needs it. Fortified by the support of S’phrony, Sim felt, if in some respects not yet the full equal of Jones, at least

sufficient to all usual responsibilities. It delighted Mr. Downs to see him lift up his head among men, even in the presence of Jones, and not much less when the Newsome fence was extended in order to take in such a beautiful slice of the Miller land. In the next year Sim's mother died, after which Mr. Downs, his embarrassment being now all gone, visited freely at the house, and contributed his part to Sim's development into a big, solid, respectable farmer.

When the novelty with Jones was about over, he seemed to feel somewhat the constraint of being confined in his attentions to just one wife, especially when Alley showed herself to be a person who would not be willing to submit to any very great amount of foolishness. Her father's indebtedness was more than had been suspected, and the dowry that had come along with her was much less than what Jones had counted upon. Alley made up—at least she tried to make up—for this deficit by industry and self-assertion, which, if he only had known it, were the very things that, for his sake, were

best for her to have. It is curious how a man who long has towered among men can be let down by one woman, not oversized or aggressive, only firm and ladylike. His lofty gait, exuberant gaiety, and overflowing verbosity declined in the constant presence of a wife who estimated him at his comparative conjugal value, and not much more. Alley and S'phrony were very friendly—ostensibly affectionate. Yet it cut Alley, who was more ambitious, to suspect that S'phrony felt that she had the better husband; for not until after her marriage had she learned that it was not for the want of trying that Jones had not gotten S'phrony; then she remembered, with a sting of more than one kind, how lightly, before their marriage, he had spoken of Sim, whom she now saw was regarded by everybody except Jones as the latter's superior. Her very loyalty imparted to these stings a sharper painfulness. Stimulated by her influence, Jones became much more energetic in business, and, like all such persons, hoped to recover his lost ascendancy. At the death of his mother, intes-

tate, a year afterward, he persuaded his sister Maria to forego a property division, as they were to continue to live together. Upon this arrangement Mr. Downs expressed his opinions, but only to Sim.

“ It ain’t people’s own fau’t when they hain’t the beautiful face of other people, Simyul, I know from expe’unce, but that ain’t no reason for them to be runned over, and they’d ‘a’ been a fuss if any o’ my people had wanted to keep me out o’ *my* sheer o’ *my* father’s prop’ty because I weren’t their equil in pooty and sizeable. As for Jones, he’s bound to be above *somebody*. He have lit off o’ you, and he can’t git the up-hand o’ his wife, and now he have lit on to Miss M’ria. He hain’t got what he expected to git by Alley, and now I suppose he think he’ll make it up out of Miss M’ria.”

Miss Maria was as good as she was plain. She had great respect for her sister-in-law, but she loved best S’phrony, with whom she sometimes held chats more or less confidential.

“ Brother thought it wasn’t worth while to have a division, as we were all together, and I

didn't care about it, as I never expect to go away from there. Alley said not one word about it, no way; for she's a good, honor'ble woman, Alley is, but it cut her sometimes, I suspicion, that brother don't make and manage equil to Cousin Sim. She treats me just like her own sister, which as for brother, he hain't always done; that is, not to that extent. He know I never expect to change my condition, and so I suppose he think it ain't worth while. And then, you know, the little baby's named Maria, which of course it's after ma, although the same name as me, and it's a' sweet a little thing as it can be, and it take to me a'most the same as it take to Alley, and so on the whole I told brother, at least for the present, and till I said different, to let things stay as they are."

Things went on with reasonable smoothness for two years longer, at the end of which, after the birth of her second child, S'phrony died. It was very hard on poor Sim, who, for all he thought about it, and grieved about it, and did everything about it that is usually done in such

painful emergencies, was not able to see how, if ever, the loss was to be repaired.

## VI

IN this while everything about Mr. Downs had grown more dry, not rapidly, but perceptibly. No; there was one exception—his love for Sim.

“Been my own daughter,” he said often, as tears were in his eyes, “I wouldn’t ‘a’ felt more miser’ble, special for poor Simyul. The good Lord always know what’s for the best; but sech as that never struck me that way. I no doubt S’phrony have gone to mansions in the sky, for she was as good as they ever make ‘em; but what poor Simyul is to do, I has yit to see.”

For several months he watched and tended him closely; he waited such time as was respectful to S’phrony’s memory, and then decided that in a manner as delicate as possible he would put forth a feeler.

“Simyul, M’ria Kindrick mayn’t be as handsome as some, nor she may n’t be quite as

young; but that nor them don' hender her from bein' a oncommon fine female, and I have been stud'in' on it, and my mind have arriv at the conclusion that M'ria Kindrick would make the best sort of a companion to them that has lost who they oncet had, and is left with two little motherless children."

Sim shuddered slightly; then in his heart he thanked Mr. Downs, whose motives he knew to be all kindness, for only hinting his thoughts, instead of blurting them out, as is sometimes done by people who seem to have not a particle of delicacy. He looked at his children, one waddling about on the piazza, the other in the nurse's arms, and said:

“Uncle Billy, it appears like to me that since S'phrony's been gone I feel like I don't keer one blessed thing—that is, for myself.”

“I know egzact how you feel, Simyul, though I ain't never been in them conditions, a-owin', I suppose, to my not a never havin' a wife to lose o' no sort. But if it was me, I should have my eye on them childern, aknowin' no *man* person can always see which sech



as them, innercent if they be, is obleeged to have."

"The good Lord know how sorry I am for'em," and Sim looked at them with much generosity.

"Of course you are, abein' they're your own childern; but a young man like you, he ought to be sorry for hisself too."

Then Sim candidly admitted that he was.

"I'm thankful for that much," said Mr. Downs, heartily, "and if it was me, I should try my level best to requiperate, like the doctor say; I should try to polish myself up in all mod'rate ways, and let people see that I hadn't give up, not by a long shot; and to save my life, I can't keep out of my head, if Jones was to divide with Miss M'ria, which, bein' his own dear sister, he's bound to do, and this side o' the plantation was to fall to her, how compact every thing would be, provided people had the mind to make it so by jindin' and nunitin' o' theirselves and it and them."

After several talks on this line, Sim lifted up his head as well as he could. It was not strange that he should drop in at the Kindricks'

occasionally, and listen thankfully to what consolation the family offered. After the first outpour, Jones did little in that way; but Alley, and especially Miss Maria, were earnestly sympathetic and kind. Sim soon began to come there quite often, so often that Jones considered it necessary to say something about it. One morning at the breakfast-table he looked up from his plate and said:

“M’ria, Sim Newsome comes here oftener than I can see fit to take any stock in his travellings and in his visits.”

At that moment both ladies had their coffee-cups in their hands, Miss Maria’s touching her lips, and Alley’s on its way. These were set down promptly, Miss Maria’s so abruptly that some of its contents splashed into the saucer. She looked straight at Jones for a second or so, then rose, and left the room.

Contrariwise with Alley. Her face reddened with generous shame, and she said:

“I have heard you make many imprudent, not to say foolish and shameless speeches, but never one equal to that.”

Her disgust was so manifest that he avoided the look which she gave him, and said sullenly :

“I jest wanted to inform M’ria that Sim Newsome was not fooling nor hidwinking me, sneaking over here with his moanin’ talks and conversations.”

“Mr. Newsome has not been coming here in any such way, Mr. Kindrick, and if he has been coming here at all with the notion which you showed Maria that you believe, I don’t see, for my life, how you could study up a better way to drive her to accept him at the first offer he makes to her.”

“My Lord! for a gentleman’s own wife to converse in that way, and on a subject of the vitualest importance to him as the man of the house !”

“*Gentleman! Man of the house! Pshaw!*”  
Then she rose also, and left him to himself. Going to Maria’s chamber, she said:

“Maria; do please try not to mind Mr. Kindrick. I am deeply mortified; but I hope you understand your brother well enough to not let

his reckless, insulting words distress you too much."

"Law, my dear child! I left the table to keep from seeing the trouble that I knew such outrageous words would give you. Cousin Sim, I don't suppose, has been thinking about me as brother hinted. But brother ought to know that if Cousin Sim was foolish enough to want me, the way to make me take him would be to talk about him in that way."

"Let us kiss, and say no more about it."

And so they did.

In a case of this sort, which inevitably must grow worse if it does not grow better, and that soon, there was one of two things for a man like Jones Kindrick to do. One was to amend himself. But people like him cannot learn to yield entirely a supremacy after it has been admitted so long. When his control over Sim had ceased, he thought to transfer it to Alley. Failing here, except so far as a loyal wife will always submit to any sort of husband, he now sought to domineer over his patient sister, and we have seen what was likely to come of that.

Jones, although not an old man, was too old to amend. Perhaps he had so decided in his mind. Then, not so intending, however, he took the other alternative. To make short an unpleasant recital, he went into a decline, and when he foresaw that he was not to retrace his steps, he asked Sim, as a cousin and a friend, to be as liberal as he could with Alley and the baby when division of his mother's estate should be had between them and Maria. And Sim promised solemnly that whatever influence he should have in that matter should be exerted on the line of the wishes just declared. Jones thanked him and the rest for all that they had done and promised, and then went his way.

“On the whole,” said Mr. Downs, kindly, “it were as honor'ble thing as Jones could do, poor feller.”

## VII

“No, Simyul,” said Mr. Downs, feeling the sweetness which we all have when in forgiving mood, “they ain't a thing I has to say ag'inst

poor Jones. He were a fine young man, if he have only knowed how to act different."

A generous man, Sim felt becoming regrets. He was touched by the appeal in behalf of Alley and her baby, and he resolved to befriend them to the degree comporting with other claims. He had not intimated to Miss Maria that if she should choose, she might have the place left vacant by S'phrony. Once or twice, constantly stimulated by Mr. Downs and the needs of his children, he had not been very far from doing it. But, somehow, S'phrony's image or lack of ardent desire had hindered. When Jones had gotten out of everybody's way, Sim gradually began to ask himself if he was quite as sorry as he used to be; for somehow, when he was at the Kindricks', he had somewhat of a notion that Jones, wherever he was (and he sincerely hoped it was a good place), had his eye upon him. Alley behaved with entire decorum, exhibiting neither too much nor too little of unavailing sorrow. Both ladies accepted thankfully his counsels about the management of their business. Seeing how much these were

needed in the comparatively run-down condition in which things had been left, he went over often, because, business man that he was, he knew it to be necessary.

This seems a fitting place to mention the somewhat changed relations of Sim and Mr. Downs toward each other. Latterly their confidential chattings had been getting into rather dwindling condition. Perhaps neither did so deliberately; but at all events they seemed to have decided simultaneously that the future, better than they, would know how to take care of itself.

Mr. Downs's land joined both properties. One day it occurred to him that the Downs-Kindrick line of fence, being rather crumbling, ought to be reset. While walking alongside he discovered an ancient mark which showed that the fence had been put by mistake on the hither side of his line. Knowing that right was nothing but right, he resolved to ride over and have a friendly talk upon the subject with one or both of the Kindrick ladies. But he did not do so immediately after making the dis-

covery. No; he first went to town and purchased some very nice cloth and other materials, had everything cut out by the tailor, and afterward—on that same day, bless you—rode away up to Miss Faithy Wimpy, whom he, as well as everybody else, knew to be the best maker-up in that whole region. When all was finished and brought back, it was then that he went to the Kindricks'. Yet he did not travel by the public road, which would have taken him by the Newsome place. He rode over his own ground until reaching the fence aforementioned. This he laid down, and, after passing over, traveled on quietly and thoughtfully. The ladies were sitting on the piazza, each moderately busy at some sort of needlework, when they heard from behind the house the opening and shutting of a gate that led into the lower portion of the plantation.

“Wonder who can be there at that gate,” said Miss Maria, suspending her work; “the hands ain’t anywhere in that part of the plantation.” Rising, she walked to the end of the piazza, and, looking back, said: “Alley, do



come here. It's Mr. Downs's horse, I *think*, but who in this world it is that's on him, I can't tell."

The horseman came on alongside the garden and the yard. Proceeding thence to one of the trees near the gate, he alighted, hitched his beast, and, opening the gate, advanced modestly up the walk. Even then Miss Maria didn't dream who it was.

"Why, Maria," said Alley, "it's Mr. Downs himself." And she smiled; for by this time, poor thing, she could pick up a little sprightliness.

"What in this world," said Miss Maria in low tones, "can he be coming here for, and from the back way? that is, if it's him, which I don't—why, how d'ye, Mr. Downs? I didn't know you at first."

"You knewed *me*, Miss M'ria," he answered, as he was shaking hands, "but you knewed not these strange clothes, special comin' up the back way of a suddent like."

"Might have been something in that," she answered, trying to ignore another faint smile on Alley's face.

“Come on business,” he said when seated, and with many carefully selected words he proceeded to tell what it was, looking at one and the other alternately. They answered promptly that they had not a doubt of the verity of his statements, and that the fence should be made to conform to the newly ascertained line.

“Well,” said the visitor, with as much heartiness as he could command, “if you two had been a couple o’ men, which I’m thankful you ain’t, I’d ’a’ had to palarver and palarver about that line, and then maybe not satisfy ’em. But bein’ women, it’s done settled in short order. I’ll git Simyul Newsome to ride down there with me some time soon, so he can see they ain’t no doubts about it. You can trust Simyul, I know.”

“Certainly,” answered Miss Maria; “but we can trust you just as well, Mr. Downs.”

“I’m much obleeged;” and afterward he thought of a thousand more words which he could and would have said but that they did not occur to him until after he had left the house.

When he reached home, he gave some swift orders to his foreman, and then, after putting off his finery, and getting into his every-day things, rode straight to the Newsomes'. When he got there, if it had been to save his own life, or even that of Sim, he could not have told exactly how he felt. He began as coolly as it was possible to try to assume to be :

“ I've been over to the Kindricks' this mornin', Simyul.”

“ Ah? I'm glad to hear it, Uncle Billy. I hope you found all well.”

“ Yes; I heard no complaint. No; I were down there by me and their fence, and I concluded I'd peeruse on up to the house and let them females know that I acc'dental found out that the fence weren't exactly on the line betwix' us, but it run a leetle on my side. When I told 'em, they said they was perfect riconciled to have it sot right. I told 'em I'd see you about it first, so you could see I weren't mistakened, as I could show a cross-mark on a tree plain as open and shet. They 'lowed they was willin' to trust ary one of us, me and you.”

“Of course, Uncle Billy. I would have known they'd 'a' said that. About what difference does it make?”

“I should say five acres, more or less, by the look of my eye.”

“All right; when you git ready, I'll speak to them, and they'll help you move the fence. I'll take your word for it.”

“That's what I sha'n't do, Simyul, and that's what I come to see you about.”

“Why, it's nothing but right.”

But in the tone of Mr. Downs and in his look was a firmness which convinced Sim that it would be useless to insist.

“No, Simyul; not with the feelin's and the respects I has for them females. You want to know what I done soon as I got home from there? I called for Sam, I did, and I told him to let the hands drap everything, and go down there and tear down that fence, and then set it up again with sound rails, top to bottom, eend to eend, on the same line as before.”

“I can't understand you, Uncle Billy.”

“I don't wonder at you, Simyul, for nother

can I understand myself, not square, straight up and down. But let me tell you fur as I can see down into my own insides."

Here Mr. Downs felt his eyes begin to tremble; so he turned them away from Sim, and thus proceeded :

"When I got there in the cool o' the mornin' like, and I see them couple o' fine women a settin' there in the piazzer, busy as two bees, and it look like the bein' of a widder have improved Alley to that, I couldn't but say to myself, if it was me, and I was a young man, it seem like the sight of her would perfect blind a feller's eye. And then I say to myself, what a pity! because, when the time come, and Simyul Newsome and Miss M'ria Kindrick may see it their juty to be pardners, if for nothin' else, for conven'ence, and then when the prop'ty is divided, I said to myself, I sha'n't fence in that land, but I'll leave it right whar it is, vallible as it is, and the timber that's on it, I'll leave it thar for the survivor."

"Why, law, Uncle Billy! I and Cousin M'ria have no such notion."

“What?” cried Mr. Downs, turning upon Sim, his eyes dancing and his face aglow with smiles. “Well, well, well! Now my mind *is* easy, Simyul, which it hain’t been before, not sence they told me the breath were out o’ poor Jones’s body for good. I knewed it weren’t egzact the thing to be thinkin’ about it so yearly, but the good Lord know I couldn’t he’p it, and I say to myself it do look like the good Lord have flung another chance in your way, after givin’ up so many times to Jones, which, poor feller, I hain’t nary a word to say ag’inst him, now he’s dead, and goned; but facts is facts, and I am now atalkin’ to you as a man o’ jedgment in this world, which no man, and I may say no’ nobody else, ever deparches from it tell they time come, and when it do, you can’t no more hender ’em from goin’ than you can hender the sun from settin’, and if he ever had a wife, the said wife is then cut loose, and that for good. Why, the very ’postle Paul writ that. Of course, you know, I ain’t sayin’ any thing ag’inst Jones, alayin’ where he is, and aleavin’ of a wife which for beautiful I never see but one

which was beyond her; but that was before you was borned. Let that all go now."

Then with a gentle gesture he waved back the image of the love of his youth, and proceeded :

" But to begin where we lef' off. When they told me that Jones, poor feller, have give up, it flash in my mind quick as thunder that it do look like Jones Kindrick have gone away peaceable and honor'ble, and flung his widder and his innercent infant on to you, aknowin' that you would forgive him and do the best you could by both of 'em; and special when I did think on my soul this mornin' she was pooty as a pink, spite o' all her moanin' caliker, I say to myself, there's Simyul Newsome's chance. As for the last survivor, Miss M'ria, I'll yit leave that line fence jest as it is."

Sim promised to ponder these words.

### VIII

WHEN one approaches and foresees the end of a story, detail is tiresome. Sim had promised to ponder, and he did so with entire fidel-

ity and some rapidity. Even yet he had not parted from all sense of the vast superiority of Jones over himself, and he looked with some dread upon the attempt to be a successor to such a man; but he remembered that he had given his promise to him to aid in having justice done to his widow and child; then Alley was more beautiful, and looked sweeter than ever before, and—yes, he was obliged to admit that he loved her. Sim Newsome, notwithstanding his humility, was a man who, when his mind was made up to do a thing, could go right along to it. So one day he went over there, and as soon as he had taken her hand and said good morning, he told her that he had come to ask if she would have him. Alley did not answer immediately, but stepped back to bring out a chair for him, and to see if Maria had gone out, as she knew that she was expecting to do. It was then that, holding her eyes down, and looking at her hands folded in her lap, she answered that she would.

And now there were left Miss Maria and Mr. Downs. It would be a tedious recital of her



lonesomeness all by herself in that big house, and the increased sense of it that lately had come to Mr. Downs in the smaller mansion which hitherto had been large enough to contain him and all his simple familiar things and ambitions. I could not say what influence interest in two romances had exerted upon a mind long unused to such things. But Jones Kindrick having gotten out of Sim's way for good and all, and the latter no longer needing help to withstand his encroachings, Mr. Downs began to feel lonesome both for himself and for Miss Maria. I never knew, nor did anybody else, precisely how these two got together. In the economy of the world, provision is made somewhere for all legitimate wants. We have been taught by microscopic investigation that even the protoplasm, which has neither eyes, nor mouth, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet, not inside, nor outside, yet knows how to seek and find affiliation with its kind, if for nothing else, for comfort in its solitude. By some sort of quasi-involuntary, but always friendly movements, executed in a comparatively brief time

after Alley and her baby had been taken to the Newsome house, these two became one. Some people said that the continued multiplication of poor kin around them had something to do with it; but others argued that the winning card in the hands of Mr. Downs, so intended when he slipped it out of the pack, was that generous sacrifice which he had made for the survivor.

## PARTING FROM SAILOR

“Meaner than sea-weed.”—HORACE

ON the piazza of Hines's store, which stood at the crossroads, very near our house, men of the neighborhood used to gather on Saturday afternoon where, after making their little purchases, they lingered and chatted about things old and new. I, when a child, often went there with more or less permission, and listened with an interest which it has been always pleasant to me to recall. I remember one conversation in particular among some elderly men about various mean men who had been in their acquaintance, and the general conclusion was that in this respect one hard to beat was Jim Rakestraw. I propose to rehearse one of the stories told about him.

In all that region during his time nobody had ever heard of such a thing as the selling

of a dog. In the first place, dogs were far more plentiful than people, except individual owners, believed there was need for. Owners, of course (and everybody was an owner), believed in the value of their own, and the general worthlessness of others. There was seldom a dog who did not have one friend; that was his master. Other people, as a rule, were either hostile to him or indifferent; and they often expressed surprise that the owner would consent to feed him for the worth that was in him. The municipal law did not countenance a suit asking damages for killing one, because it was a thing in which courts did not recognize property which was worthy of their consideration. Whenever a person had one which he cared not to keep for his own uses, it was dispatched—generally by drowning—unless a neighbor cared to have it, in which case it was given to him out and out, and no ado, not even of thanks, made about it. If a man had gone about offering to sell one of the things, he would have been regarded not much better *than* a dog, and it was right there that the

especial meanness of Jim Rakestraw came in. The common law in this matter he was the only one in that whole settlement who had no more self-respect than to break, and that in a way that added to the disgrace.

He was a tall, gaunt, big-footed, lazy fellow, with a wife, a houseful of children, and more dogs than these, including, sometimes, the sides of bacon that were in his smoke-house. With one exception, those dogs were hounds, and that of low degree, so low indeed that they would plunder hens' nests, and even sneak into the dairy and the pantry, and help themselves to whatever they found there.

Mrs. Rakestraw was an excellent, industrious, and extremely meek woman, who was trying to bring up her children well, and keep as decent a household as was possible in the circumstances. But Jim, too indolent to work, when not lounging about the house and yard, went roaming with his hounds; and he believed, or pretended to believe, that the rabbits, squirrels, and opossums taken in these excursions more than compensated for the ab-

sence of what his family might have had, if he had been without this pack of greedy consumers, and tended properly the small but sufficient bit of ground which his wife had inherited from her father. People used to say they wondered how such a nice woman could ever have married a good-for-nothing like Jim. Yet she was like many another, who, after getting a mean husband, and finding out how great and how incurable his meanness is, goes silently along, doing the best she knows how, and trying to look over faults which she has learned from experience that it is useless to endeavor to amend.

On the place was a dog of which all the family except Jim was very fond. It was a handsome cur, neat, honest in his habits, devoted to his mistress and her children, even down to the very baby in the cradle. Then to some degree he was a protector against those thieving hounds which, when not stretched on the ground, were everlastingly prowling about places where they had no business. At every fair chance Sailor could get, he bit one of them

in the midst of his marauding, although he had been whipped by Jim several times for doing it. One day Jim said to his wife:

“Betsy, several people wants that dog Sailor. Mr. Jenks, special, told me yisterday he’d like to have him for a guard-dog, and help in huntin’ up some wild hogs in his reed-bottoms on the creek; and I told him if you didn’t have any great objection to it, I ruther thought I’d let him take him. I didn’t say I *would*, positive and p’int-blank, because I ain’t sure in my mind that I can make a good thing out of it.”

And he tried to look both innocent and wise; but he looked only sheepish and mean.

“Oh, dear me, laws, Mr. Rakestraw!” she answered, quickly. “I’d hate to part from Sailor; and I just know the children would cry to see him go away from here. Why not let Mr. Jenks have one of the hounds? You’ve got more of them than is needed, seems to me.”

“That I hain’t; not for the use *I’ve* got for hounds. Them hounds brings in too many things to this family for me even to think about partin’ from one of *them*. No; not one

single one of *them*, cert'n sure. Besides, Mr. Jenks already have now as many hounds as he want; and then he don't want the breed of 'em mixed, so he say."

Several days passed, and from his silence they hoped that he had decided not to let Sailor go; but one night after supper he said:

"Betsy, as you seemed ruther ag'inst my givin' away Sailor to Mr. Jenks, he said to me to-day when I met him on the road that he'd like to buy him; and he offered such a big pay for him that—fact of the business is, I thought it were my juty to take it; and I told him right down I'd do it."

"Oh, Mr. Rakestraw! Sell a *dog*, Mr. Rakestraw! Why, I never heard of such a thing. I shall feel bad to see Sailor go; but I'd rather you'd give him to Mr. Jenks out and out than to sell him. I don't know what people would think of us for selling such a thing as a dog, poor as we are. Indeed, Mr. Rakestraw, I'd be afraid of some sort of bad luck coming from it; that I would."

"Well, now, as for my part, I can't see how



people should think strange of it; and if they did, it's my business and not theirs. I've got along so fur myself by 'tendin' to my own business, and other people may do the same. *But*, when a man, and a rich man at that, make me a offer of twenty dollars for a piece o' prop'ty that's no more account than that cur-dog, that he do nothin' *under* the sun but lay around the house, and fight my hounds every chance he git, when he see my very eye ain't on him, like it were him owns these whole preemurses, and not me, why, I say ag'in, it's jes' my very juty to take it; an' my word is done passed to do it, and that to-morrow."

"Twenty dollars! That *does* seem a big price for—for a dog."

Indeed, they were so poor that to them it was a very large sum.

The next day, fastening Sailor with a rope, Jim led him away. When they were out of sight the mother and some of the children cried a little; but soon they dried their eyes, and went to their work, such as were big enough, all trying to hope that everything

would turn out for the best. Some little things were needed by Mrs. Rakestraw; but she decided that the portion of the money which her husband, considering that Sailor had been her own property, would allow to her, should be spent in getting some necessary things for the children.

When Jim came home again he had on an air of much satisfaction, and bestowed general looks and words of kindness among the whole family for whom he had done such a fine thing. The little children occasionally glanced toward his pockets, expecting, perhaps, to see them all swelled out with those moneys so much vaster than what they had ever seen in all their lives. He made no sign as to whether at all, or in what proportions, it was on his mind to distribute among them; and, of course, not one in the family made any allusion to the matter. Next morning, after eating breakfast, and calling up his hounds, he said:

“Betsy, I’m goin’ ahuntin’ this mornin’.  
'Twasn’t exactly covenant yisterday, and so Mr. Jenks said he’d send the pay for Sailor

over here some time about 9 o'clock. Take keer of 'em tell I git back, won't you? and don't let the children go to handlin' nor med-dlin' in no ways."

"All right, Mr. Rakestraw," she answered, meekly; "I'll do like you say."

About two hours after, as, with her sewing, she sat before the cabin door, she heard the yard gate opened and shut. Looking up, she saw advancing a negro boy, having under either arm what seemed an awkwardly wrapped bundle. As the comer approached she recognized in him one of Mr. Jenks's servants, and the bundles proved to be a couple of very young hound puppies.

"Mawnin', Mis' Rakesaw!" greeted the boy, with a hearty grunt. "De Lord know I'm tired atotin' o' dem hot, wigglin', squirmin' puppies; that's the ill-conwentest load *I* ever went anywhar to k'yar."

"Howd'y, Peter. What on earth are you going to do with those wretched little things?"

For, indeed, wearied with travel in a way so unusual, the little beasts looked intensely for-

lorn, and when put upon the ground let forth howlings so pitiful that the baby in the cradle near by, waking up, knew no better than to join with his utmost in the chorus.

“Marster sent 'em to Mis' Rakesaw,” said Peter. “Dee traded 'twix' dem en de dog he fotch yisterday to our house. It 'pears like your baby skeer't of 'em.”

“My good gracious!” she exclaimed, but instantly her womanly delicacy put itself forward. Lifting the baby, and giving it to one of the older children to quiet, she said to the boy:

“All right, Peter; did your master send any word?”

“No'm. Marster say I jes' got to fetch de puppies here, en den come on back. Good-by, Mis' Rakesaw.”

“Good-by, Peter. I'm much obliged to you.”

I couldn't tell the disappointment, the sense of humble hopelessness, nor the less humble submission. Yet there was some relief in that her husband had not sold the dog for money, a thing which she had feared might have low-

ered him yet further in people's opinions. Putting the whelps in as fit a place as she could find, and feeding them to their fill with milk and bread-crumbs, she cautioned the children against showing to their father any disposition to complain, then went back to her work.

Notwithstanding the squirrel and the two rabbits brought by Jim, when returned from his hunt, and despite the thickness of whatever it was that covered the heart that was in him, on his face was a look of some little consciousness of meanness. Yet it was easily repressed, and he cried, triumphantly:

“Now, ain't they beauties, Betsy? They come o' that breed o' long-legged hounds were sent to Mr. Jenks all the way from South Calina, and the stock of 'em run back clean plum up to the Revolution war; and Mr. Jenks said, and he said it sollom, that, 'twern't so many in the last litter he could spar' a couple of 'em, nobody could git 'em for love or money. And he said he wanted Sailor, and if I said so, I might have a couple for him. Now I valled them puppies in my mind, I did; I valled 'em

at ten dollars apiece, and cheap at that; for it ain't anigh what they'd fetch, if people was to begin biddin' ag'inst one 'nother fur 'em, knowin' how fur their mammy come from, and how fur back the stock of 'em runs."

He was content with the silence which, as was habitual with his wife, followed his boasting.

This was told by old Mr. Pate, who, after the rehearsal, thus commented:

"In my time I don't know the numbers of good, fine women that has had mean, triffin' men for their husband, albe I can't deny that sometimes, not often, but sometimes, the boot have been on t'other leg, as the sayin' is. I've studied a heap on it, and my mind have about got to conclude that the good Lord ordered it so, aknowin' it weren't best for the same kind o' people to jes couple and huddle together by theirselves. It's that, or somethin' else, cert'n. But as for Jim Rakestraw, well, my opinion of him have always been, and special after his meanness about that cur-dog and them hound-puppies, that whoever want to go about

alookin' for a meaner husband, and a meaner man of family in gener'l than what Jim Rakestraw were, he got to git up and start on the hunt soon in the mornin'."

## TWO ADMINISTRATIONS

“Alas, regardless of their doom,  
The little victims play.”

—*Ode on Eton College*

### I

IN the village of Sangston was a school of about fifty boys, including ten or a dozen boarders. They were not thought too many, but rather too much, for the last teacher, a man of uncombative disposition and only ordinary physical strength; and so when he had to run away, as it were, in search of a less arduous job elsewhere, the patrons, hearing what a famous disciplinarian was Mr. Isaiah Cubbedge, who had been practising his profession in another village some fifty miles south, invited him to come and try what he could do with the material on hand. He was a tall, wiry, pale gentleman, hungry-looking as unhealthy, although it was said that he never missed at home a



meal's full victuals, nor a day's, nor a part of a day's attendance at school. He seemed to desire to visit little and be visited less, his mind being occupied entirely with studying how to manage his business. He was thought to be the very man that the Sangston people wanted to manage these boys, of whom old Mr. Bigger had said that unless somebody could be gotten suited for that purpose they were bound to take the whole town. A man of few words outside was Mr. Cubbedge, and a deep, low voice, inquiring but not confiding in its tone. Among his features, perhaps the most interesting was his nose. It started out modestly, even as if timidly, from the narrow space betwixt his small, deep-set, gray, ever-moving eyes, and seemed to feel that it had no need of a bridge worth speaking about. But after passing beyond the position where the bridge, if one had been deemed necessary, would have been built, it began to lift itself up, and kept on lifting and diminishing until it came to a point where it looked cunning as inquisitive. When he was talking to people, or being talked

to by them, his eyes fluttered all over and around them as if seeking for the most unguarded place for his nose to pierce. The boys used to say that what made him so lean and sickly-looking was the eternal watch which he put upon them, while constant exercise in flogging kept up his appetite. Having come there with a great name for discipline, he acted as if he meant to hold on to it and, if possible, exalt it to yet sublimer heights. His education was not of the best; but it was regarded good enough for the discipline, which was the main thing. One boy boarded with him. His father, hearing what a great thing the discipline was to be, wanted him to get all the possible good of it. We shall see that he did so.

School-boys like to try the metal of a new master. These, fifty strong, said in private that they would have to be made to see how they could not dodge any such man. For dodging was the limit of their ambition. Every one knew that if he either resisted or ran away from the discipline, he would be brought back and made to take, perhaps, a double portion.

Such was the temper of the times, which now seems so strange.

To outsiders (particularly Mr. John Overby, who, having been through such a régime, was thankful to have come out no worse hurt) it was funny to notice how soon, after the coming of Mr. Cubbedge, the hope of dodging him had nothing to stand upon. In school, out, study-time, play-time, daytime, night-time, seldom any mischief could be done—singly, in couples, in threes, in large gangs—that would not be detected, when punishment of some grade was sure to follow. Some good men in Sangston and its vicinity were thankful, and were led to indulge some hope for the young when they heard that Mr. Cubbedge spent so much time in ferreting out and punishing evil doings. He was not a bloodthirsty man, like some of his class used to be. He seldom cut with his hickory or his peachy tree below the skin, however much he might be fond of stripping it; but his chief pride was to show, inside and outside, that it was not worth a school-boy's while to try to fool him. Little Billy

Wiggins, who was caught and whipped at least once a day, used to attribute his bad luck to the nose which in vain I have endeavored to describe.

“His old nose is everlastin’ turned up and alookin’ around, and it can smell same as a hound.”

The name of the favored boarder was Newton Pollock. He was undergrown for fourteen, and had a dark, though mild face, except when he was engaged in mischief. The belief of Billy Wiggins in the nose came from Newt, who told him and others that Mr. Cubbedge had a kind of soap with which he polished it every night, so as to keep it keen, alert, and investigative. All pitied poor little Newt, living right there in the very house of Mr. Cubbedge, yet, foolhardy as he was, hoping to escape his watch, and a limited sadness was fondly indulged when he told of the whippings he got almost every night of his life under the peach-tree at the back of the Cubbedge garden. For Mr. Cubbedge, standing for the time being in

the place of Newt's father, administered his punishments within the domestic circle. His parents must not be disappointed of their great expectations from his peculiar privilege. Jim Brantly, a boy of seventeen, one of the leaders in sports, mischief, and general school-boy unlicensed achievements, habitually said:

“I'd simply just die before I would board with him! In the place of his father! Yes, and his mother, and his big brothers and sisters, and his uncles and aunts, and the overseer, even *him* to have an occasional whack at the poor little fellow! Don't talk to me about old Cubbedge being Newt's *father*. It makes me sick to hear him name the very name.”

Yet Newt, who claimed to be as tough as whalebone, said he could stand it, and would stand it, rather than get his share of fun, or run away to be brought back for worse. Then Mrs. Cubbedge, a fattish woman, whose main destiny, as it seemed, was to get up good meals for her husband, let the latter do all the scolding and punishing in the family, and Newt thought that sometimes she looked as if she

would like to give him some advice if she could ever find an opportunity. On the whole, his endurance and his temerity got much admiration. This was carried to a high degree one day, when, as Mr. Cubbedge was passing along the line with his switches of assorted sizes, Newt came up, and, in a sort of bold humility, said: "Mr. Cubbedge, I wish you would give me my whippin' along of the other boys."

The master momentarily smiled; then bestowing a stern, parental look, answered: "Do you go straight back to your seat, Newt Pollock. I'm responsible to your natchuril father for you, sir, and I shall attend to you how and when and where it suit my convenance and my duty as a parrent."

Newt slunk back, feeling ever so badly. The boys thought it showed enormous pluck.

## II

THE many guises of Mr. Cubbedge, and their many findings were commented on much—for the most part favorably.

"The very man we've been wanting for these

boys," said old Mr. Bigger. He had no young children, but perhaps took more interest in things than if he had had a houseful. Pronounced in opinions, feeling himself the equal of any in argumentation, he was fond of tackling Overby, a large, good-tempered young lawyer, who had not joined in the praise bestowed upon the new teacher. Mr. Bigger hoped to remove the difficulties in the way of his understanding by persistent appeals.

"Yes, sir, Johnny Overby, the very man the Sangston boys needed to head them in their pranks. If it wasn't for Mr. Cubbedge there's no telling what people would do: gates changed all over town, fences built across the street, wheels took off and hid everywhere, and, as for strawberries and May-apples, it's come to that it ain't worth a body's while to try to raise such as them even as it is."

"Have you noticed, Mr. Bigger," said Overby, "that there are more of such things since than before Mr. Cubbedge came?"

"Now, Johnny Overby," replied Mr. Bigger, in immediate disputant mood, "that's like a

lawyer pleading a case when justice, if not law, is on the other side. I'm not talking like a lawyer, but like a plain, honest man, and I say it shows the good of d's'ipline, and if *somebody* can't find out the boys of this generation in their badness, why, old people will have to give up everything to them, and I have knew school-boys, Johnny Overby, ever since long before you was born, and I have never knew them as bad as they are now, and agetting worse every day."

It was only a day or two back that Mr. Bigger had been roused from sleep too early one morning by his driver (who had instructions to carry to the mill a grist of corn) by news that the hind wheels of his wagon were on the front axle, the fore wheels on the hind, and the tongue clear gone. It had taken full two hours to get things out of confusion, and go on to the mill in peace. It was some consolation that Mr. Cubbedge, to whom the outrage had been reported, had detected and punished the parties engaged in it. A good man was Mr. Bigger, but fiery, and by the boys regarded as



their enemy. Then they were fond of hearing accounts of his mighty wrath and threatenings when such tricks were played upon him.

In the discussion, which was long, and on Mr. Bigger's part quite animated, the young man argued mainly that, in his opinion, the fame of Mr. Cubbedge would be put on a firmer foundation if he could prevent crimes, instead of detecting them after their commission. When, wearied by what was a mere war of words, he was about to turn away, Mr. Overby said:

“Well, Mr. Bigger, in the case of Mr. Cubbedge and his famous discipline, I beg to enter an appeal.”

“An appeal? What do you mean by that, sir?”

“I appeal to the future. My opinion is that matters are going to get worse.”

The old man looked at him with angry compassion as he moved on toward his office. But Overby's appeal was justified. Hen-roosts began to be robbed, especially that of Mr. Bigger, and in spite of Mr. Cubbedge's dis-

guises and prowlings, no trace of a stolen chicken, alive or dead, could be found. Hearing that Overby had laughed at this news, Mr. Bigger, meeting him upon the main street, accosted him thus:

“Now, Johnny Overby, you are obliged to acknowledge that for such as that there isn't a solitary grain of excuse, and I just want to put you one question, if you'll answer it fair and square. Do you love chicken, or do you not?”

“I do, sir—much, very much.”

The old man looked around among the bystanders and said, “Gentlemen, you see he has given up the whole case.”

A hearty laugh arose, in which Overby joined as merrily as the rest of the audience; then he said: “Yes, Mr. Bigger, you have me there; but what about Mr. Cubbedge? Why don't he detect the boys and punish them?”

“Just because he *can't*, sir. I put the case before him, and he says it's altogether too much for him; that he has set up, and gone around time and time again at night, and he

just can't. He say somebody must be in it besides school - boys; but I don't believe it myself."

By this time all except these two had walked away. Then the lawyer, with an air of much mystery, in a low voice, said: "Those chickens were not stolen by the boys, Mr. Bigger. If they were, Mr. Cubbedge would have found out every single case."

Then he broke off suddenly, as if on pressing business at his office. Mr. Bigger looked at him steadily for several moments, then slowly followed.

"Johnny Overby," he said, when seated in the back room, "you looked just now like you knewed who'd been robbin' them hen-roosts."

"I do not, Mr. Bigger. If I did, of course I would give information; but I believe I can find out."

"Well, sir, if you can, I'll see that you are paid a good fee, and I'll tell you mostly for why. If they get two little Dominickers that I'm tryin' to raise, to get into the breed of, I shall get so mad that I'm afraid I'll say things

that I'll have to be had up in the church for."

"Would you recognize those chickens if you were to see them in a strange, unexpected place, Mr. Bigger?"

"Why, yes, man. I could swear to them in the moon."

"Then, sir, if you can be perfectly quiet upon the subject, and not mention the word *chicken* in public, my opinion is that I can find out the thief—at least one of them."

A week afterward the day was bleak, and was followed by a very dark night. Near midnight, at the signal of a whistle on the rear premises of an inexpensive mansion, the master of a small family came out quietly, and was met by a negro man with a basket of chickens. The price asked being more reasonable than when sold by daylight, and a twist or two of tobacco being accepted in barter, the buyer and the seller, the basket held between them, were about to move toward the hen-roost when the sheriff, with a posse of three, headed by Mr. Bigger, rushed forth. When a light was

struck, and two young Dominicas—a rooster and a pullet—were taken from the basket, and found to be sound in wind and limb, the good man shed tears. Perhaps these were more profuse because the buyer was—Mr. Cubbedge!

It was a pitiful sight; there under the peach-tree, so many of whose twigs had been torn away for putting parental discipline upon Newt Pollock's little back. The nose of Mr. Cubbedge, after its many findings, seemed so disgusted with this last that, if practicable, it would turn and take itself far away, after piercing one by one the invaders of his premises.

“I had to see it with my own eyes to believe it!” said Mr. Bigger; “and hadn't been for Mr. Triplett that helt me up, I'd 'a' fell plump on my head aclimbing over them palings.”

It was Saturday night. They agreed not to prosecute if the culprit would leave the village by Monday morning. His wife refused to accompany him, and after a few days went back to her people. She said that she had often remonstrated against her husband's trading with negroes, and she expressed the opinion that he

was partially insane. The poor woman *had* to believe something, you know, to mitigate the shame she felt.

### III

AND now what was to be done for those everlasting school-boys, as Mr. Bigger called them? The exiled school-master went away, not wholly without that gentleman's respect.

"I'm a man that'll give even a dog all the credit he deserves. I owned a first-rate 'possum hound once, but he were caught sucking eggs, and suspicioned of running after sheep, and so I made the niggers kill him. I give Mr. Cubbedge credit for finding out what *I'd 'a'* never done, and hadn't been his own self that had them chickens stole he'd 'a' found out that too. You see there was where the poor man was lacking."

It was about the middle of the school term. After some persuasion Overby agreed to take charge for the remainder. One of the citizens took Newt Pollock into his house to stay until his father's wishes could be known.

“I’m afraid Johnny Overby ain’t fit for the business,” said Mr. Bigger. “He caught Mr. Cubbedge sleek as a bean, but I have my doubts if he can catch them boys, because, you see, he likes ’em so well that he have confidence in ’em, when everybody knows that a school-boy is a school-boy, and always will be till he’s quit and been put to work. Still, I say this in confidence to everybody, because it’s the best parrents can do for the present, and I don’t want to discourage him in the very first off-start.”

At the end of the first day the new teacher said among his friends: “These boys until to-day seemed to like me. Yet this morning, as soon as I had entered the room, I saw that I was regarded as an enemy and a spy. My first impulse was to drag down an armful of hickories from Cubbedge’s rack, and go to thrashing around generally for the imputed insult that I had ceased to be a gentleman on the instant of getting into their collected presence. It was too easy, however. Then I reflected that they had never had opportunity to

learn better behavior. It is a more embarrassing thing than I expected, and I'm almost sorry that I undertook it. However, I am going to do *something* with those chaps, see if I don't."

About the practical jokes played upon the citizens during several consecutive nights he said not a word, being employed in efforts to convince the boys that his mission there was mainly to teach in books, a thing which had been secondary during the late administration. One morning Mr. Bigger, finding every vehicle on his lot without wheels, and every enclosure without gates, rushed with as furious haste as his advanced age would allow down into the village, and inquired of Mr. Overby what he was going to do about it.

"Nothing, Mr. Bigger. My hands are full of business of my own." Then he went on to the school-house.

"Well, if it wasn't for my little Dominickers, I ain't shore—" But Mr. Bigger stopped, knowing, on sudden reflection, that it would not be right to give expression to the thought that was on his mind. So he looked at Mr.



Overby's back, and said, "He's done failed a'ready, just as I said he would."

The teacher's omission to take notice of the matter was a disappointment all around, for your school-boy does not wish to be ignored entirely when he has been striving to produce much excitement. The floggings gotten for mere idleness were so inane that they were disgusted, and in a conclave of the most daring a conspiracy was made to do something which it was believed would rouse this new young master to a higher sense of the duties and difficulties of his position. The very next morning, when he entered, the school-room was a sight which, if it had been Mr. Bigger, would have endangered his being called up before the church sure enough at the earliest Conference.

As it was, Overby laughed. There were the desks and benches turned backward, sideways, all ways except the right, and all crossed and piled, piled and crossed. When he had taken his fill of laughter he pondered for a moment or so, then said :

"As matters here are in no case for business,

and as I have some at my office, I shall go to it, and not return before to-morrow morning, at which time it is probable that I shall dismiss this school for good, write to the parents of the boarding pupils to send for them, and advise that all of you be put to work rather than waste time in such fooleries as this. Before I do break up, however, I shall call the roll, and ask every boy to answer upon his honor, if he has not lost what sense of it he was born with, what part he had in this funny business. I don't know but that I might like to keep a school, if I could get a set of boys who would give some promise of becoming in time the gentlemen their fathers are. But, by-by till to-morrow."

These words were effective. Not a boarder wanted to be called home, nor a native to be put to work. They rearranged the furniture, then parted in silence, disgusted every one with the rest. An hour afterward, Newt Pollock, going by an unaccustomed street, repaired to Overby's office, where, thankful to find him alone, he immediately said,

“ I’ve come to tell you, Mr. Overby, who all mixed up them benches and things.”

“ Were you one of them, Newton ? ”

“ I done a little bit, sir; but Jim Brantly and them—”

“ Stop, sir ! If you mention another boy’s name, I’ll break your neck ! Look at me, boy ! Was it through you that Mr. Cubbedge found out so much about the mischief of the boys ? I knew it was somebody. Was it you ? ”

“ Yes, sir; it was me sometimes.”

“ And didn’t you know that such as that was the meanest thing that a white man’s son could be guilty of ? ”

“ I didn’t think it was all right, Mr. Overby; but Mr. Cubbedge told me, and pa said I must do every thing he told me.”

“ What made him beat you so much, then ? They tell me he wore out a whole peach-tree on you.”

“ Never struck me a lick in his life.”

“ Well, well ! Look here, boy, did you know that that man was in the habit of trading with negroes for stolen property ? ”

“I never dreamed of it, Mr. Overby. I give you my word I didn't.”

He looked at him narrowly for a moment, then said: “I believe you, my poor boy. Some day you'll find out how near you've been to ruin. Go away now. Don't you say a word about this conversation. If those boys were to know what you offered to tell me, they'd tear you to pieces or run you out of town, and be right in doing it. Go on. Shut the door when you're out.”

#### IV

OVERBY walked in the next morning, keeping his hat in hand, as if he had called merely for a brief visit while on his way to an important engagement somewhere else. He appeared to be in the best of tempers.

The boys sat silent and sad and orderly, showing that every one, native and foreign, had been talked with. The young man's purpose was to get parental influence in the direction which he believed most appropriate. The solemnest, humblest-looking was poor little

Newt, who shrank as a mouse in reach of any number of cats and kittens.

“Well,” said the master, promptly, intent on despatching at once the little business of his call, “how goes it? How do you all feel yourselves this morning? You look calm and healthy. I am going to begin with calling the roll, and as I proceed, I want those who in anywise took part in the disorder here yesterday morning to rise. I expect every boy to answer for himself alone. If any one informs, or shows that he wants to inform against another, I shall drive him out with the biggest stick that Mr. Cubbedge has left; and if I am to stay here (which in a few minutes I will make up my mind whether or not to do), I shall do the same with any whom I may find hereafter to have answered me falsely. Those who may expect to do this will save time and trouble if they will make for their hats and take themselves off. All ready? Here goes.”

Thirty-one rose.

“High! Quite a batch! I knew that it required numbers to finish up that job so com-

pletely. When the time comes for you to be put to real work, your parents and employers will find you handy enough. I've no doubt that every one has answered truly. Now sit down and listen to me for a few minutes, as I have just this minute made up my mind to keep with you at least awhile longer."

After they were seated, he had a talk with them, of which the following was a part :

"As far as I know or believe, the father of every boy in this school is what is generally called in society a gentleman. Now a gentleman will always hold himself responsible for his own actions, and he never utters a deliberate falsehood. Gentlemen sometimes do put upon one another practical jokes; but they are never such as wound feelings, do injuries, or subject to serious inconvenience. Some of those which you boys have been playing upon several citizens of this village must not be repeated if I remain at the head of this school. For I will not that anything that I have to do with shall be regarded by my neighbors as a nuisance. Another thing. A gentleman never

puts himself on the sly with others, and nobody ever needs to be put on the sly with him. Now I maintain that a boy can be and that he is bound to be as much a gentleman as any man, and that he will be if he be treated so as to be made to feel that such is expected of him. The unhappy man who was lately in this place, not a man of honor himself, had never learned how to deal with those who are. You saw into what misfortune he was led by this ignorance. Perhaps some persons, a very few, suspected you of the crime by which he was disgraced. *I* did not.

“A few words now about myself. What I claim, so far as you all are concerned, is that I am a gentleman, bound by every obligation to be one, and that I have education enough to teach what your parents wish you to know about text-books. I know not how else to deal with you than in the plain ways common among gentlemen everywhere. I will not watch you in secret. At the same time I say to you frankly that I am easy to believe what people tell me with expectation for me to be-

lieve. But you shall not report to me against one another, except as to such things as, for your own protection, I ought to know. Even in that event, I should rather that you would first give information to your own parents or guardians. Whatever comes to me must come with the knowledge of the one who is to be informed against. If any of you should prove too indolent, or otherwise too reckless of the wishes of your friends in your behalf, to meet my efforts for their improvement, I shall send them home; for it suits not my tastes to habitually beat other people's children. Now I like you, boys, and you used to seem to like me before I came here. I cannot understand how such an action should make me forfeit your friendship and kind opinions. In that regard I am going to hope to be reinstated.

“On this plan I have undertaken for a short time to keep this school. Whomsoever it suits, let them stay. If there are any whom it suits not, let them gather up their things and go home.”

When Newt Pollock's father had come in



answer to Overby's letter, he was sorely distressed to find how he had been used, and he inquired, although none could answer, where Mr. Cubbedge might be found. It was touching how he pleaded Newt's limited understanding in extenuation of his behavior, and expressed his thanks that it had not been made known in the school.

Mr. Bigger could never quite understand how changes so salutary could have been wrought, except by constant use of the hickory or the peach tree. Waking up of mornings, finding that not a wheel nor a gate had been disturbed, he looked sometimes as if he were disappointed, and inwardly indulging gloomy prophesyings. You see, everything was so entirely against time-honored precedents. For a time his manner toward Overby was somewhat reserved; but when he found that the young man showed no disposition to taunt or to boast, and when his young Dominicas had grown up and taken their proud places in the barn-yard, he seemed to feel that, as an honorable man, he ought to strive to be reconciled.

## ALMOST A WEDDING IN DOOLY DISTRICT

“ Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure ? ”

—*Julius Cæsar*

### I

MISS EMELINE LYNCH, independent and honorable as she was, would not have thanked anybody who knew it to go about making a blowing horn of the numerical rank held by herself among five sisters, the youngest of whom, imitating, with this single exception, her elders, had been married long enough to have several children, more or less interesting. At the period of this little episode in her personal history she was indisputably at the head of her aged father's house, and so had been since the death of her mother ten years back. Well aware that everybody knew of her not having remained single for total

lack of opportunities, she was entirely cool in discoursing upon such matters.

“As for marrying,” she not unfrequently said, “and the marrying of women partic’lar, that’s a question that have two sides to it. Because, ever since and before I was too young and giddisome to know much better, I have been anoticing that there’s many a girl marries, and after she *have* married, and *been* married long enough to find out what they is in it *to* their cost, it looked too plain to me that they feel like if it was to do over again, they wouldn’t. But then you know, and they do too, that it’s then everlasting too late to be making a big to-do about it, like the poor girl in the spelling-book pictur’, that she look so pitiful and not expected at her pitcher *in* her hand, and her milk spill’t *on* the ground, that sometimes I’m a’most always sorry for her, spite of her keerlessness in not alooking where she was atreading with her feet. Now I never have said that I *wouldn’t* marry, that is never and at no time, make no odds who it was asked me. For they is nobody that know positive

what they may do sometime or another, when things may happen that their mind will alter. For, as for women, all so be I'm one of 'em myself according to the app'ntment of the good Lord, I hain't come yet to any settled conclusion, what they will do and what they won't when they take the notion. Pap sometimes says I ought to get married, because he's getting old, and I ought to have somebody to look up to when he's gone. But I tell him they are two sides to that question too, the looking up, or, as to that, the looking down, or around in gener'l. But to get married, just to say I *am* married, as some do, to keep from being called a old maid, I am not one of that kind. I've seen too much to the contrairey."

The old man, Johnny Lynch, had been living where he was ever since his marriage. The mansion, originally a double cabin of hewed logs, had been added to in one or another modest, irregular way, as the needs of his increasing family required. So he had added to his inherited acres from time to time, and now, after giving over to each of his daugh-

ters upon marriage what dowry could be spared, he was not in debt, and even had a little money out among his neighbors. If he had known how dependent he was upon this good daughter, possibly he would have been less concerned about her forming a connection which must have subtracted from that in which both were living in content. But he had been happy as a married man; his other daughters on the average had done reasonably well, and so, somehow, he was anxious that Emeline should not be left to live alone.

It was in that section of the county next from ours across the Ogeechee River, known as Dooly District, wherein were large bodies of piney-woods land, which, although much less productive than those in the upper region covered by oak, hickory and their likes, yet supported a large number of families who were content with such returns as moderate industry could get from them. Hitherto they had submitted without much complaining to be regarded inferior to those at the county seat and the parts around and northward,

representatives from whom held, as if by inherent right, the principal public offices, political and municipal. Lately the righteousness of this precedent a few had begun to question, none so noisily as Jeffrey Hammick, justice of the peace, who had his residence and the holdings of his court at the crossroads, three miles from the Lynches'. He had an excellent, hard-working wife, who had done her very best in the performance of every duty; but he was one who probably would have been poor and continued poor, wherever he might have lived and whatever vocation he might have followed. He liked this office because it required little work to be done, brought him in frequent contact with people, let him often hold in his hands moneys, although knowing that, except his costs, he must turn them over to others, and feel that thus he might be more surely on the line of future promotion. All of the children except one had gone away, the girls marrying poorly, and those whom the boys took to wife doing likewise. Only Patsy was left, who was small for fifteen, of weak un-

derstanding which there had been few opportunities to cultivate even to a degree that was possible, yet tolerably pretty, and lately getting somewhat rid of her palishness, and showing signs, modestly however, that she was willing to be noticed by young men. She knew that she wasn't bright, and this made her seem humbly thankful for attentions, however inconsiderable. As she was, she became now the extremest hope of her mother. They dwelt in a double cabin, with two small shed rooms behind, which for years and years the wife had been vainly hoping would be bettered in one way or another.

Squire Hammick, among his many goings about and talkings, had picked up a good deal of information of one sort and another; and he was never without hope of being able to employ it upon a broader plane. By this time patrician rule, which long had been almost exclusive in middle Georgia, had begun to yield to democratic invasion, and goodly numbers of men from several of the counties were being elected to the General Assembly who, though pos-

sessed of good properties, understood much less about enacting laws than running plantations. Several such had been chosen in this very county, but in no instance from Dooly District. Hammick of late had been calling frequent attention to this fact on Court Saturdays, and he believed that he was making some impression. Even if such an honor had come down there he knew that he could hardly count upon being its first recipient; but then it would be a beginning of better times in whose fruits he might confidently expect to share. Before any active movement was begun on this line an interesting stranger came into the district.

## II

THE newcomer, calling himself Putnam Davison, and claiming to be a native of one of the lower counties in South Carolina, was a slender, darkish, not ill-looking person, apparently between thirty-five and forty. His small, bright gray eyes looked as if in their time they had seen many more things than were known to the simple folk of that community, among whom



it was a surprise that such a man should have come there and located himself. After moving about somewhat among the people and inspecting several sites for a country store, he decided upon the crossroads, taking board with the Hammicks. Reserved to a degree that seemed becoming to a stranger, yet his answers to direct interrogatories seemed satisfactory in one who seemed too modest to talk, except privately and that in a mild way with his host, about his experiences which were intimated and believed to be interesting. Within convenient radius of the store were quite a number of nice girls and a few widows, who were waiting for opportunities not too unreasonable. Among these, if he was more particular in attention to any one, it was Miss Lynch, who accepted them very graciously, more, she said, because it gratified her father, than because she was disposed to take into her hands the newest broom that was ever born or made. No; she was not of that sort. It was avowedly from the same motive that whenever she went to the store, or saw him coming

to her father's she put on an extra ribbon or so.

The merchant seemed to compassionate Patsy Hammick's limited gifts and opportunities, and kindly encouraged her to take good care of herself, grow as fast as she could, and be improved in all possible ways, giving it as the opinion of a man who had seen more of the world than she had, that if his advice was followed, she might marry before people expected it, and that higher than she had ever looked for. Of course, as he said rather confidentially to Miss Lynch, the poor child ought to have some encouragement, if she could get it. Miss Lynch made little remark upon such speeches, believing that she had good reason. But Patsy felt herself much helped up, and soon began to look of another sort. Not that she was bold among young men who were taking note of her improvement. No; away from home, or before company at home, though not so shy as formerly, she kept the same reserve, as if she felt not the slightest need of haste about things of that kind. Her father, with whom she talked much

more freely than with her mother, was well pleased with all the appearances. A rather small, shaggy-haired man, he was credulous as he was loquacious, and hopeful as ambitious. His wife, whose own experience had been harder than might have been, or ought to have been, whose other daughters in the marriage line had done nothing to boast of, was far less hearty about the changes in Patsy.

“Don’t you let that man put too high notions in your head, Patsy,” she occasionally said. “You know not a thing about him, nor nobody else knows but monstrous little. He’s got a object of some sort in behaving so polite to everybody, poor folks and all; and you better mind what you’re about. Your pap thinks he’s some great somebody, special since he’s found out, he say, that he have once killed a Injun. But to save my life I can’t fetch my mind to think he’s all what your pap and some other people is abeginning to make out; and if he is, you may be perfect sure he’ll never want *you*. In all events, every girl have to be partic’lar about herself with men. If I was called on to

pick out a pattern of a woman about not being fooled by men-people, its Em'line Lynch, that she's always jest as calm in her mind where they are as where they ain't, and she declare she'll never marry *no* man, she don't care who it is, till one come that she feel no doubt in her mind she's going to better herself. And it's the advice I give all my girls; but nary one of 'em would take it."

Patsy, never replying in words, and trying not to do so in looks, inwardly shrugged her shoulders at the absurdity of comparing herself with one, who, unmarried yet, was old enough to be her mother.

Miss Lynch, although a trifle taller perhaps than most lovers would prefer, and her mouth, by this time from habitual firmness of character and speech, a little drawn at the corners, yet was a lady quite personable enough for such a man as Davison, unless he should be proven to be a greater man than to her he seemed. Toward her it was noticed, soon after his coming, that his manners were pointedly deferential. While now and then with other unmar-

ried females he jested—yet never to intemperate, even hearty hilarity—in her presence he wore the air of manlike seriousness; and once or twice, in a distant, melancholy way, he had hinted that he doubted if it was prudent, or exactly according to Nature for a man to remain always single, and therefore he had been thinking, more so lately than ever before, that he might eventually feel that he owed to himself to look around. She heard him say his say, yet gave no sign whereby he could guess whether or not she might become willing to aid in his explorations.

“Pap,” she said one day to her father, “the men-folks, you among ’em, and some women and girls, it appears, act like you all think there’s a mighty heap in Mr. Davison.”

“Why, my daughter, it’s perfect certain that he have a heap o’ inf’mation, more, a long ways, than anybody about here, special about the late war ag’inst the British, which they say he went in it when a boy and fit under Gen’l Jackson; and Squire Hammick say he have it from him p’int blank that he have kill’t one In-

jun, if no more. Jeffy is a chattery-scattery talking feller, I know; still the man is a inf'mation man and seem like perfect studdy in his ways."

"Well—I don't know; but I wish the man would look straighter and clearer at people when he's atalking to 'em. I don't believe Missis Hammick thinks so overly much of him. I don't know the reason, but I'm going to find out. She may be poor and plain, but she's got sense, and she's jest the best female person I know, and I'm agoing to find out."

"Well, my child, look like you're goin' to keep puttin' off and *puttin'* off about your own self."

"Don't you be afraid that I don't know and won't know how to take care of myself, my dear old pap."

Never a hard word had been between them. There was some delicacy in the matter of investigating Davison through Mrs. Hammick. Miss Lynch pondered long the changes in Patsy, her better dressing, the brightness of her face when at meeting or otherwheres from

home; these, with the innuendoes of Hammick about prospective better fortunes for his family, in contrast with the deeper seriousness of his wife. Deciding that it was a matter of duty, she made up her mind to go there before very long. Before she had fixed upon a day for the visit some things occurred which I will proceed straightway to narrate.

### III

DAVISON had been there something over a year, had done reasonably well in his business with the capital of a few hundreds which he had brought, and had made many acquaintances, a goodly number even in the upper districts of the county. Among the most cordial of these was James Slater, a rather stout, loquacious man of about thirty. He came from near the border, and, strictly speaking, was about half pine and half oak, although, for reasons partly social, but mainly political, he had been claiming heretofore to be all oak. He had been acting deputy to the sheriff, Granbury Backus, slight, darkish, reticent, some years

older; but being dropped by him, he determined, if he could make desirable combinations, to run for the office in chief at the next fall elections. Aspiring far beyond any strength that he possessed, yet the position which he held carried with it a certain prestige which he relied on for as much at least as it was worth, and it was not long before he became hopeful of success. After circulating among the other districts with results not quite satisfactory, he went down into Dooly, where many consultations were had between him, Davison, and Hammick. The Squire would have liked, the best of all things, to get to the Legislature, and Davison declared that he would much prefer him to himself. In this he was partially sincere, as, for special reasons, he would have liked better an office which would not have taken him out of the county. But it was plain enough before Slater made it more so, that Hammick could not carry the district, a matter that was essential. He gave up readily; but it was because he had been made to believe that in good time he



would have Davison for a son-in-law. So the combination was made, and it was not long before Jim Slater was regarding himself as shrewd a wire-puller as could be found.

Mr. Lynch went to the county-seat habitually on Saturday in every fortnight. At one of these visits, Slater, waiting till the old man had gotten through with his business and some friendly chattings, followed him to the horse-rack on the public square, and, as he held the bridle reins ready to mount, said:

“Uncle Johnny, I’ve been wantin’ to talk with some of you leadin’ Dooly people. Why don’t some of you never come out for the Legislatur’?”

“I don’t know, Jeems, without it’s because none of us ain’t smart enough to git there, or ain’t thought to be.”

“Well, now, it jes’ hurt my feelin’s to even hear tell of any sech a insinuation, and, fact is, it ought to be stopped; for if I ain’t mistakened in the const’ution o’ the State, everybody o’ the people at large is liable to have their rip’sentatives. *And* if I was a Dooly man—and I

*am* half, as you know, on my mother's side, and proud of it, to boot—yit, in that case, I should plant myself solid on my rights and on my dignities; and I should call on everybody else down there to do the same likeways of all shade.”

“Why, Jeems, I don't know of anybody that *want* to go to the Legislatur'; that is, anybody that's fitten. I has heerd along this year occasional some little complainin's that the deestrick has to 'pend on the oaky woods always for rip'sentatives. But I've been satisfied with them we has had. Fact is, I couldn't if I was called on, I couldn't name a man down there that would keer about runnin' that every voter would feel like unitin' on. Squire Hammick might like it, abein' of a ruther a ambitious sort of a creetur'; but I hardly think he could make what I'd call much of a rally.”

“If,” said the deputy, as if to a third person, with respectful consideration for the good man's modesty—“if *I* was called on to name the name of the man that would m. e the very ground swell all down the 'Geechee and Long

Creek bottoms, and go bustin' along clean to the very lines an' bound'ries of Wash'n'ton County and Jeff'son County, and come a even ararin' up into the oaky woods, the name I should name would be the name Uncle Johnny Lynch go by, both when he's *at* home and when he ain't; and I am allowed to say that them is the sentiments of Cap'n Davison and many a Dooly man besides."

"Oh, no, Jeems," he answered in sincere protestation, "I'm too old, and I hain't the eddication. That is perfect out o' the question, Jeems."

"Well," he replied, as if much disappointed, "a man know his own business, and what suit him better'n other people; but me an' Cap'n Davison—ah, well."

"Cap'n Davison, you say, Jeems? I didn't know he were a captain."

"Oh yes; I didn't know it myself, tell I pinned him down to acknowledge it. He have greatest respects of you, Uncle Johnny, and I don't know how often I've heerd him say that as for Miss Em'line, he haven't seen her beat nowheres."

He saw that the parental heart was touched, and he said, quickly :

“How would *he* do ? That is, provided he could be got to run ?”

“Well, now, Jeems, I hain’t been thinkin’ about anybody for sech as that. Cap’n Davison, as you call him, seem like a nice man, and he have a heap o’ inf’mation. I’m gratified in my mind he ’preciate Em’line, that she’s good and industr’ous, if I say it. You come down and talk with our people. I’m too old for sech ; but I sha’n’t say a word ag’in Mr.—or Cap’n—Davison, if he turn out to be the man.”

Having thus secured the most influential man in the district, Slater went further to work among men and among women. He regretted that the limits of his education kept him from the highest flights while discoursing upon military renown, and the importance of lofty aims among marrying females. It soon became noised abroad that Captain Davison, with much reluctance, and only after repeated urgent solicitation, had consented to stand for the Legislature at the ensuing elections ; and it

was said that his friends, depending in general upon his well-known fitness, would rely mainly upon his war record. Then followed a campaign, some incidents in which old men tell of with interest even to this day.

#### IV

AT that time, in want of more commanding strength, the *régime* of class supremacy in this county had suffered greater inroads than in any of the neighboring. This year quite a number of new men came out for the various offices. When it was announced that Dooly had put forth a candidate, oaky woods people laughed; but they became serious when it was said that in his day he had killed an Indian. Men now living remember the eagerness with which the candidacy of this hero, lately come from foreign parts, was advanced. People, especially women, not only piney, but oaky, went into the canvass, and a stranger might have thought that the savages were not all yet across the Ogeechee. Legends of their atrocities were revived to the degree that afterward Backus

declared that in his opinion the very spelling-book couldn't hold all those women's words. The Captain, soon made conscious of entire security, did no other work, not even for Jim Slater, except to move about not too much, let himself be lauded, and look as if he felt that he had done no more than any true man, on opportunity, would do for his country. One day a gentleman who had retired from the contest asked Jim to tell him something about the killing.

"My gracious, man! I thought you was one as kep' up with hist'ry. I couldn't p'int out the very *place*. Look into hist'ry. It's in there som'ers. If it ain't, it's bound to be when it's writ full and complete."

Then he broke away, and went again on his raging.

The one cool head was Backus. Unlettered, he was yet a seer of what was in man.

"Gent'men," he said to the other candidates, "this thing's agoin' to have its course, and it ain't worth while to try to stop it. You all let him alone, it is my advice, and fight among

yourselves for the other places. The deistrict *is* liable to have one rip'sen'tive; and if they want a man nobody knows anything about, why jes' let 'em, special as you can't help yourselves; as for Jim Slater, I'll try to take keer of him."

One day, when Davison was in town, he took him aside, and after looking at him in silence, until he saw that he had embarrassed him, said:

"Cap'n Davison, I wouldn't be surprised if I didn't know more about you than you think. Now, if you go to fightin' me too hard for Jim Slater, my opinion is, it'll do you more harm than good."

It was purely a guessing venture; but it went home. The Captain shivered for an instant, and answered humbly:

"Why, Mr. Backus, you're mistaken if you think I'm doing anything against you. Other people brought me out; I didn't want it."

"Well, I jes' thought I'd fling out them primary remarks to let be knew that them that fights me is liable to git fit back. That's all."

Shortly afterward he whispered to one of his friends :

“Nothin’ in him. He’ll git elected, because most o’ the women and the old men is fer him ; but to my opinions, he’s agoin’ to drap down after the ’lection, and that suddent.”

At the close of the court on the day of election, Jim Slater, whose name was at the bottom of the list, went to Davison, and in a voice loud enough to be heard by several others, said :

“It was me that had you ’lected to the Legislatur’, and stid of totin’ far and helpin’ *me*, you let me come out at the very tail end o’ the ticket. Now we’ll see what good it’s goin’ to do you. You fooled me, and you’ll fool the rest of ’em, and you’ll fool yourself yit.”

Although known to be no fighter, he waited a moment for an answer. Receiving none, he turned away as from an object of disgust, and went out. The scene surprised everybody except Backus. Davison men were much chagrined. If he had knocked down the insulter, a thing which he could have done with impun-



ity, his prestige might have stayed long enough at least to enable him to avoid some of the troubles that, unknown yet to any human being, were destined soon to pursue him.

If men newly elected to offices beyond expectation most ambitious, could avert all molestation afterward concerning methods employed in their campaigns, what times they might have! But even members-elect of Legislatures cannot be always blest. Remembered promises, some perhaps conflicting, charges with oblivion of services, enmities born where one sees them necessary to have them not, threatenings about unearthing of buried things whose resurrection would be unpleasant—such as these sometimes sadden the most eager aspirant. On the ride home with Hammick, who was running over with exultation, the Captain, for the most part, was thinking of Jim Slater. Jim had become a smaller fly than ever; yet I do not know if he who invented the simile considered the size of the insect that invaded the unguent. Then what Backus had said, together with some other things, had led him to

fear, even before the election day, that he had made some mistakes, and it behooved, if he could not correct, to prepare, and that soon, for their avoidance. Already had he been talking with a merchant at the court house about the disposal of his stock of goods preparatory to any change that might possibly become emergent. On reaching home at supper time he smiled with apparent pleasure at the congratulations, more expressed in looks than words, by Patsy, who had on her next best frock. The girl saddened immediately after the meal when, announcing that he was tired, Davison went off to bed. It was not the first time she had done so, latterly. The mother's uneasiness, begun soon after the coming of Davison into the house, had been growing more and more serious. But, with one exception, she kept her thoughts to herself. This was Miss Lynch, who, in pursuance of her resolution, had repaired to the Hammicks', some days before the election, and come away fearing that she had found out more than she had been expecting.

## V

HOW many new calico frocks were gotten out on the next morning ready to be put on, Jim Slater perhaps could have guessed nearer than anybody else. The Captain, noticing that Patsy seemed quite down-hearted, chatted with her as pleasantly as he could, for a while putting her back into cheerful mood.

“It’s all right, Patsy,” he whispered, as he rose to go to his horse standing at the gate. He did not tell her whither he was going; but in less than an hour he and Miss Lynch were in particular, intimate conversation. When he had announced the intention of his visit she scrutinized him for several moments, then said:

“I won’t deny I been athinking about you, Mr. Davison, from what you said to me, and your and Jeems Slater’s hints to me and the rest of the family; but to be honest with you, I’ve done it to satisfy Pap more than my own self; and my conclusions I’ve come to, I don’t want you, and couldn’t be injuced in no ways; and my advice is to you to go and marry

Patsy Hammick; the quicker it's done the better."

His face showed instant disgust and apprehension.

"Do you suppose, Miss Em'line, that I'd marry that foolish thing, that hasn't sense enough to—to—"

"I'll finish your words—to know what she was about when you were trying to make her believe you wanted her, and she believed you. I've got not another single word to say to you, Mr. Davison, excepting that if you have fooled that poor girl intental, you ought to do what you promised, and if you won't jest so, you ought to be made to. Yonder's your horse."

She flirted herself away, and he immediately left the house. He knew that the sands beneath his feet were shifting away. Remounting his horse, he rode to the court house, and did not return till the next day, accompanied by the merchant with whom he had been negotiating and to whom he disposed of his stock, one-half for cash, the remaining money to be paid in twenty days.

That night Mrs. Hammick was taken quite sick. Next morning, after quite an affectionate talk with Patsy, Davison said that he must go to town, and that he would return at least in two or three days. He kissed her at parting, saying as before, "It's all right, Patsy." And he gave her ten dollars, which was many times more than all the money that ever was in her hands. Something of a pain not entirely of his own touched his heart, as, after mounting his horse, he turned his head and noticed how yearning was the look which he believed was to be the last to be bestowed by her upon himself.

The case of Mrs. Hammick grew worse constantly. Two days after Davison's departure, Patsy, borne upon her father's nag of all work, went to the Lynches', saying that her mother was very sick, and wanted Miss Emeline, if she could, to please come there soon as possible. Putting in a bundle a few possibly needed things, Miss Lynch set out at once with the messenger. Patsy's incessant weeping made her hasten her gait. All she could learn by

questionings of her was that the doctor said it was a bad case of fever, and he was afraid she wouldn't get over it. The eye of experience at once detected that the sickness was unto death. After brief words of salutation the visitor said :

“ Missis Hammick, is anything on your mind you want to say to me ? ”

“ Yes, Em'line, honey, when you git rested good, and we has a chance.”

“ Tell me now, my dear friend. You'd better. I'm not at all tired. Mr. Hammick,” she continued, turning to him, “ you and the rest please go out for a little while. I'll do whatever's wanted in here.”

When they had retired, drawing one hand from beneath the coverlet, and raising it, the invalid said :

“ Em'line, my mind have been pestered about Patsy, poor child, that you know how weakly she's always been. I want to talk to you little bit about her if you're willin', and I has the strength.”

“ Certainly, Missis Hammick ; talk perfect

free, and I promise to try to do whatever you want done."

"Thanky, oh, thanky, Em'line. I knowed not who, under the good Lord, to turn to but you."

The few words were enough. She labored so painfully that her friend, taking down from her face the withered hand, pressed it softly and said :

"That'll do—that'll do ; I think I understand the case ; and as God lives in Heaven, I'll do all I can for Patsy."

"Bless his holy name ! Oh, Em'line ! I feel so happy, I—I—"

Then she sunk into sleep.

It was a mercy that Miss Lynch came. The house was full of those none of whom knew what to do ; the husband, sympathetic in looks, as if he had been the tenderest of his kind, the other children and children-in-law all in one another's way. Miss Lynch moved among and put them aside, as if they had been chairs or stools. That night, calling all to her bedside, the mother told them that she had given Patsy

to Miss Lynch. At sunrise she died. Patsy then throwing herself upon the bed, cried piteously :

“ Oh, Ma, I didn't tell you—”

“ Hush !” said Miss Lynch, seizing her arm and lifting her from the bed. “ It was well for the poor soul you didn't. Go and wash your face, and comb your hair, and tie some of your things in a hank'chief; and be ready, time I'm done laying her out, to go on back with me home.”

Nobody objected to the bequest. After the funeral Miss Lynch obtained from Hammick, in the presence of witnesses, his solemn relinquishment of all claims to Patsy ; and when they were at home, made her sit down by her side, and then demanded, in the name of the mother who was dead, and who, as she said, was in Heaven and hearing every word that was said, to be told the whole truth about her and Davison. Patsy did her best to open her whole heart. The questioner believed that she saw into it as into her own.

“ That'll do,” she said, rising, and snuffing



loudly through her nostrils; "if they is any law in the land for such as that, I'll make that man marry you, sure enough; and if they ain't, I'll make him sorry, somehow, for the day he ever laid eyes on you. I'm going to town to-morrow."

This feeling of motherhood, in the childless, as in the bearer of many children! How benignant of the Creator in imparting it to every female! The little child dresses and fondles her doll, whether of porcelain or of rags, undresses, lays in the cradle, and rocks to sleep. These are the earliest prophecies of motherhood, and, being without selfishness, are perhaps sweeter than fulfillment even the most felicitous. The maid, past the time of love and its fruiting, adopts somebody or something on which to shed maternal love that can never be entirely objectless. Emeline Lynch, feeling for the first time in all her life that she was destined not to marry, accepted from the arms of her dying friend one who else must become an outcast, and already the sense of motherhood was felt by her to be like it would have

been had the adopted in infancy depended upon her breast. Feeling for the girl's weakness a contempt without limit, in her dead mother's place she conceived a dire hatred for him who had outraged it. In the breast of the new mother were none of the shame nor the remorse which, however undefinable or undeserved, might have been in the one who had died; therefore resentment was more fierce in the triple sense of innocence, superiority, and security from personal taint. The last infirmity of virtue is temptation to indulge pride, which of all, because of extremest difficulties in its curing, is perhaps the most to be shunned.

## VI

THE collapse of extravagant, unreasoning favoritism is generally as rapid as its rise. The jeerings of those who had voted against Davison stimulated inquiries which, before the election, were unheeded. Yet people were less concerned about the time and circumstances of the Captain's military exploit, than ashamed of themselves for making so much ado about

the killing of one Indian, when there was not another, even a friendly, within two hundred miles. They must rid themselves of some of the shame, and throw it upon Davison, who, but only at the last, had shown himself unworthy of their support. Tom Kemp, one of his most ardent backers, made so purely for the heroic fighting qualities of his candidate, on the very night of the election expressed his disgust.

“’Stid o’ knockin’ Jim Slater down, and stompin’ him for his imp’dent, he hacked like a whipped hound, which go to show that if he ever kill’t a Injun he shot him in the back. As long as I live I’ll be sorry I voted for him.”

“It look,” said the sheriff, “like it were ruther a big hullaberloo about one single lone po’ Injun; don’t you think so, Tom?”

“I do, Mr. Backus; blamed if I don’t. I’m agoin’ to take one more drink, and then I’m agoin’ home.”

The member-elect remained in town, and studied the changing phase of public opinion. Early one morning, taking Backus far aside, after speaking at some length upon present

conditions, he asked for counsel. Backus for several moments appeared to be reflecting gravely on what answer he should make. At length he said:

“Cap’n Davison, as Jim Slater say that were your name you was knew by where you come from, you has ast my advices, and I’m agoin’ to give ’em, honest, squar’. They is beginnin’ to be some talk, and some dissat’faction about the way you got elected; an’ people has been a-askin’ of theirselves, and a-askin’ o’ Jim, where you come from for cert’n, and where, an’ when, an’ how you come to kill that Injun, and Jim say say he know nothin’ about it, an he say he’s done with you an’ the Injun, to boot. But what’s ahurtin’ you the worst, the wimming has begun to turn ag’inst you, which you know they was the mainest backers you had from the stump. The talk is that some o’ them young wimming in Dooly, not countin’ in wid-ders, has been ruther trifled with by you, along o’ Jim in your name, which my expe’unce is that’s one o’ the danjousest things for a feller to let hissself git caught at, an’ run the resk of

gittin' his brains knocked out with a stick, or his back took with a cowhide, or a hole made through him with a shotgun, er a rifle, make no odds which, as to that; *er*, if not that, then sued for britch o' married contract, and a verdi't for big damage, an' not able to 'spon', an' then took with a *ca-sa*,\* and not be able to give secuority, bein of ruther a stranger in the county, when—”

He paused momentarily, and looked in the direction of the place where the jail stood. Noticing the abject terror of the man, he proceeded:

“Course, in sech a case, a feller can take benefit o' the insolvent law; that is, if he can prove they ain't no fraud in the showin' he make o' what prop'ty he have; but no man that think much of hisself love er want to do sech as that. Now, Cap'n Davison, I has heerd it hinted about that some people believes that you has actuil give your word to Patsy Hammick; an' ef so be, an' you don't stand up to

\* Abbreviation of *Capias ad Satisfaciendum*, a writ directing the sheriff to seize the person of the debtor.

it, they is obleeged to be some trouble o' some sort. Them is plain people down there in Dooly deestrick; but they've got cha-recter, and they've got the sperrit, special when their wimming is in the case. They ain't not so very much in Squire Jeffy Hammick; but Missis Hammick, that the poor woman is dead and buried, but I have heerd many and many a person down there say, male and female—I've heerd 'em say that, to their opinions, she were the very hardest workin' and the best Christon woman that went to Long Creek meetin'-house; and that girl, which everybody say she were a ruther weakly kind of a girl, which makes sech as that go to hurt people's feelin's worse'n if she'd 'a' been better able to take keer of herself. I'm told Missis Hammick on her dyin' bed give Patsy to Miss Em'line Lynch, and Miss Em'line have adopped her out and out. You may know much about Miss Em'line Lynch as whut I do. If you don't, I'll simply say that if *I* wus to git in a scrape o' that sort, I'd soon have any six men ag'inst me in Dooly deestrick as Miss Em'line Lynch, 'ithout I could com-

permise the case—splendid fine woman though she be. Ahem !”

They parted. Davison went immediately to his debtor, and proposed to discount at twenty per cent. for cash the promissory note for his goods. The proposal was accepted on allowance of three days for raising the money. Thence he repaired to his boarding-house near an edge of the village and there remained until he was called for later in the day.

## VII

EARLY that morning Miss Lynch said to her adopted:

“Patsy, my child, I’m going to town to-day on some business. I hope you ain’t going to be too lonesome with thes yourself and Pap—won’t you try not, honey?”

“Yes’m, I won’t be too lonesome. I’ll be sewin’ most o’ the time.”

“That’s a good girl.”

Taking the family gig and a small negro boy along, she drove to town, and alighted at the house of the sheriff. Delaying only to say

and hear a few words of greeting with Mrs. Backus she walked to the public square, where she noticed Backus entering his office, having just parted with Davison. Hasting there, and finding him alone, she instantly broke forth:

“ Good-morning, Mr. Backus; we are all well, I thank you; Missis Backus say you all well; I come to see about that man Davison that I want him took and made marry Patsy Hammick, that now her poor mother’s dead and gone, I’ve adopped her according to her request, that he promised the poor thing to marry her over and over again, and not only so, but told her he *were* married to her, making her believe it, and keep her mouth shut tell he could get ready to tell it to her parrents and everybody else by and large, and if it’s necessary for her to swear to it, I’ll fetch her here; but I’m ready to kiss the book my own self, and swear I hain’t nary doubt about what she have told me, and she ought to be married if she ain’t. Where is he ? ”

“ He’s in town somewheres, Miss Em’line. I see him come out jes’ a minute ago from



Lockett's store, and go on towards Missis Wade's, where he bode. You say he have told the girl he were done married to her?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Backus—yes, sir, and then he pretend to say some sort o'cer'mony, and then he threaten, if she tell anybody before he get ready, he'll go away, and leave her; my Lord! and what's the first thing to be did, Mr. Backus? I ain't got time to tell you all that man's meanness. What's the first thing to be did? Pap say if any lawing's to be done I better go to Mr. Channell; but I thought I'd see you first."

"Of course the papers has to be got out first, Miss Em'line; and you'll have to have a lawyer for that."

"Come along, then," she said, rising and almost rushing out. As soon as she was in the lawyer's office, she exclaimed:

"I come to see you, Mr. Channell, excuse my manners for forgetting to say howdye and good-morning, and ask how your family was, ahoping they're well as common; but Pap said go to you if any lawing was to be done against that Davison, and I brought Mr. Backus along to

tell you better than I could what's to be did, and then I want him put through the whole len'th of the law if he don't marry Patsy of his own accords like all honor'ble people does."

When he had gotten from her a statement of facts, he said:

"Unfortunately, Miss Emeline, there is no provision in the law for forcing a man to marry against his consent."

"What, Mr. Channell! not after he have fooled a young, weakly, ign'ant girl that knows nothin' about law, nor mighty little about anything else, and made her believe, as the poor thing believe to this day, she were married to him accordin' to the cer'mony he tell her they has where he come from? Ain't they no law for sech as that, Mr. Channell?"

"Oh, yes; women thus outraged may sue for pecuniary compensation, which, in a case like this, I've no doubt any jury would put at a very high figure."

"You mean money? Because, if you do, the miser'ble creetur hain't a tent' nor not even a fift' of what he ought to pay her for her—and,

and—the good Lord!—that I has to have sech a case on my hands that always have tried to be a modest female according to the raising my mother give me—but, oh, my gracious!” she looked as if she wanted to scream. “I wish, in my *heart* I wish I could be a man one time and come up with that villion, and him tell me he never promised to marry Patsy Hammick, and won’t. I’d *make* a law for him, I would! Well, I want the law put on him what it’ll be so kind and condescendin’ to do in this case. And then, if he can’t pay up, you and Mr. Backus, a-including your cost, I want him put in that jail, and me be his egzekerter till the last dollar, and the last cent—”

She stopped, put her hand to her brow, and seemed that she felt herself yielding to passion that was not entirely becoming. Soon tears came, and removing her hand she let them flow, and, then, in soft, tremulous voice, said:

“Mr. Channell, and you, Mr. Backus, you know what makes me go on this way? If you don’t, I’ll tell you. Her mother were the very

salt of the earth, if they *is* any, and I humble believe she's been, ever sence the breath went out her body, have she been akneelin' down before the *throne* of God, and apraying Him, not only for her poor child she left on my hands, but for me, jest me, that I might be stren'thened to do fur her what she need. And don't you know? I got so I *do* believe I love that child, weakly as she is, and people'll say she's ruined, that I love her same as if she was mine. It ain't me; because I'm one that's of a hard—that is, I'm one that in gener'l it's been hard to be perfect satisfied with them about me, special them that's younger than me, besides of being females, and my nature have been changed to that sence the death of that poor, hard-working, humble Christon, that I jest *know* it ain't me, and that it's nobody but the good Lord in heaven. Fix up your papers, Mr. Channell, sech as I have to sign, as I want to be getting on back home."

When the papers usual in a suit for breach of marriage promise had been drawn, also copies and the process of the court, it was late

in the afternoon. Davison had not appeared on the street since morning. Channell, acquainted with the understanding between him and his debtor, repaired to the latter and requested him to send a messenger saying that he was ready to comply with the offer of the morning without further delay, as the money had come in that evening.

“I’ll deposit it with you, Mr. Lockett, if it’s found to be needed.”

The action was not unnecessary. Davison’s horse stood saddled at the gate, and he was waiting for his supper before mounting. His hostess had told him of having seen Miss Lynch in town that day. Shortly afterward he had gone to his room and packed his saddle-bags. When the horse was brought out, he asked for an early supper, saying that he was going to ride down to Squire Hammick’s to return the next day. Indeed, he had resolved upon flight, making first for Augusta where, from the well-known credit of Lockett, he did not doubt of being enabled to easily discount his paper. Immediately after the

coming of the messenger, without suspicion he repaired to the store. At his entrance, Backus came out of the back room and said, in his calm, slow manner :

“Cap’n Davison, beg pardon for int’ruptin’ you and Mr. Luckett; but I want to say a word before him and you begin your settlement. Miss Em’line Lynch was in town to-day, and she come as next friend, I believe the lawyers call it, yes, as next friend of Miss Patsy Hammick, which *she’s* under lawful age, as I s’pose you might know, and she—that is, Miss Em’line, do—she want to know if you’ll marry the said Patsy like you promised.”

Pale, in abject despair, he answered:

“Mr. Backus, I never promised to marry Patsy Hammick, and it can’t be proved I did. Everybody knows what a poor, weakly—Mr. Backus, I *can’t* marry that girl; it’s perfectly impossible.”

“That’s enough, Cap’n; I got nothin’ more to say about that; but I’ll have to take charge of you for the time abein’, and my authority is this writ, a-askin’ ten thousand dollars for

britch o' married contract, and acallin' for bail."

### VIII

WHEN told that he whose wife she believed herself to be had been imprisoned for refusing to acknowledge her, Patsy was shocked to a degree that alarmed Miss Lynch. Hearing two days afterward that he had consented to marry her publicly, she became more happy than ever she had been in all her life. Davison had already sent in his resignation as member-elect of the Legislature, and made to Mr. Channell a showing of his effects, which, besides his horse and its accouterments, amounted to about eight hundred dollars. He proposed, on condition of dismissal of the suit and release from jail, to marry Patsy, give her five hundred dollars, and then leave the county. The lawyer advised acceptance. So on the next day but one Miss Lynch took Patsy into town. She and Mrs. Backus made ready the bride as well as possible in the brief time allowed, and seldom one more blushing and

trembling went forth to meet the bridegroom. Miss Lynch trembled also, and she whispered to Mrs. Backus that never in all her born days had she felt so scared.

“I can’t tell what is make me so, Missis Backus; but I’m that trimbly I don’t know what to do. If anybody ever did want anything over and then be let go back home, it’s me. I thes know that if it was me myself a-going to get married, I wouldn’t be that put out. Ain’t it a pity, when a woman has to be so anxious to have a girl she love like she were her own child married to a man she despises, and ’twern’t ag’inst Scriptur’, she wants him dead and in his grave? Please pray for me, Missis Backus, if you have time; but don’t let anybody know I asked you. Oh, my!”

Accompanied by Mrs. Backus and two other woman friends, Miss Lynch and Patsy reached the church door as the sheriff with Davison, followed by the minister and a dozen or more of others, came. The bridegroom, pale and haggard, raised not his eyes since the moment of quitting the jail, even to look at



Patsy when Miss Lynch led her to where they had paused before ascending the steps. She looked appealingly into his face and did not note the deep aversion with which he turned from her. At that moment Channell came up to the front with an elderly gentleman with whom in the rear of the procession he had been chatting in subdued tones all the way from the jail.

“Who is that old man with 'Squire Channell?” asked several in whispers, and none could answer.

“Wait a moment, please, Mr. Backus,” said Channell in a loud voice. “A gentleman who has lately come into town wishes to say, before this marriage takes place, a few words which it may be important to the parties to hear.”

Davison turned, and at sight of the stranger, shrinking, retreated until his back was against the house, where he stood gazing as if at his last avenging judge.

“Mr. Sheriff,” said the man, “you, reverend sir, and all who are assembled here, I am one

of the representatives-elect of the coming Legislature from the county of Decatur. My name is Leverett. For the purpose of securing comfortable quarters during the session, I went to Milledgeville in advance, where I met your Mr. Anderson, who was there with the same intent. Hearing him mention the circumstances in which one of his colleagues, a Captain Davison, had gained his election, and afterward sent in his resignation, I was led to suspect that I might know that person. So I obtained a means of conveyance and reached this village about an hour ago. The sight of the prisoner has verified my suspicion. His name is not Davison, but Woodson. Two years ago, in the county of Gadsden, in the territory of Florida, he intermarried with the daughter of a man well known to myself. Within a few weeks afterward his wife, some of his fraudulent practices having become known to her, separated from him. Leaving that county, he came to my residence, where, knowing that I stood under some obligations for assistance rendered by his father-in-law, with a forged

letter pretended to be written by him, he got from me one hundred dollars; and I have heard, on very best authority, that he similarly defrauded several other persons in Florida. His wife, within my certain knowledge, was living ten days ago, and I have every reason to believe that she is now. Little as such a man deserves an interference which screens him from punishment for the perpetration of bigamy, a yet more heinous crime, yet, as an honest citizen, and as a faithful conservator of the laws, I feel myself constrained to make it. It will be some satisfaction to her friends, that this young woman can have what benefit and comfort are in this solemn public recognition by the man who so outraged her. My child," approaching Patsy, "it is cruel for you to be so sorely disappointed; but I trust—"

"I don't believe it!" Patsy shrieked. Then, running to Davison, she tried to put her arms about his neck. He flung himself away from her, saying:

"Get away, you— Don't you *see* I can't marry you?"

Then addressing the sheriff:

"I've got nothing to say, Mr. Backus."

By this time quite a number of townspeople were at the scene.

"Gent'men," said Tom Kemp, in a low voice, slowly advancing, followed by several others, "*we* ought to deal with that man."

Backus seized the prisoner's arm, and, facing the men, said in a low, firm tone:

"Boys, you know, 'ithout my tellin' you, that sech as that won't begin to do, and can't be done 'cept over my dead body."

Then he took him away.

Patsy, uttering a piteous wail, sank upon the ground.

Lifting her, and with one arm fondling her to her breast, Miss Lynch raised the other, and cried aloud:

"You people, you proud folks that lives in town and think you have contemp' for them that has feelings for sech as this, I want you to know that they isn't one of you that loves the smartest, beautifulest offspring you've got any better than I love this poor girl that her

mother give her to me with her dying breath. And I tell you now that she's as innocent of sin, and of the meaning to do it, as any child that ever hung on its mother's breast, and sickened there, and died there."

Smoothing the hair on Patsy's forehead, saying, "There, now, precious, that'll do," she led her away. -

Before leaving for home she took her hostess aside and said:

"Missis Backus, don't you know, I feel like I ain't been quite coming up to my promise to poor Missis Hammick? And it's because I've so often been *that* angry and mad with that man, that I know the good Lord don't want no sech in nobody, it being *him* that keeps kindled the coals for sech people's heads, as we have thankful saw poured on this blessed day, which I can't remember as I ever felt as calm and peaceable and thankful *in* my mind as when that good old man, bless his heart, when he stepped for'ards so unbeknownst, and clinched the nail on him anot'ithstanding the egzitement when my heart went pitter-patter,

pitter-patter. Because, don't you know, that dear good woman never opened her mouth to say nary single angry word ag'inst that man, all so be she suspicioned what I know for certain. Because you know the good Lord lets good people, when they're dying, he lets them forgive like they want to *be* forgive. But now it's all over, and it look like the poor man have so many things to answer for, maybe a-including some more which nobody about here know anything about, it look like he may never git out the penitentiary alive, at least in my day, I feel like I ought to try to forgive him, if I can, for Patsy's sake, that you see for yourself, she love the miser'ble villion yet, which I do think on my soul, it made me that—but I made up my mind not to keep angry and mad, if I can help it, and I want you to tell Mr. Backus to tell Mr. Channell to tell the judge, when he come down on him, that I, a-acting not for myself, but as Patsy's mother, like her that's dead app'inted me, that I want nothing done to the poor creetur' excepting what the law allow. Because, don't you know, Missis

Backus, I want to try to forgive as I want to *be* forgive. Good-by, and I thank you, and I know Patsy do, if she *is* one that knows not how to say it; but we both thank you for all the trouble we've put you to."

After remanding the prisoner, Backus and Mr. Leverett repaired with Channell to the office of the latter.

"And did the feller ever kill the Injun, sure enough?" asked Backus.

"Not that I ever heard," answered the gentleman. "It became known, however, very soon after his marriage, that he had been grossly defrauding an aged inoffensive Indian out of a little property that he had; and this and other rascalities which his wife discovered led to her abandonment of him. Her father and some other citizens forced him to restore the property and take himself out of the county. Not long afterward the old man disappeared also; but I never heard that Woodson or any other had been suspected of making way with him. Yet there's no telling what such a creature would not do."

“Well,” replied Backus, “I’ve been in this country, been forty-two year last week; I were born up on Williams’ Creek, and I never knewed the rip’tation o’ killin’ a human of no sort to start up so brash and come down so suddent flat. What’s your opinions, Squire Channell, if another one of ’em was to come here and start arunnin’ on that line?”

“I rather suspect, Backus, that after giving him some start in the direction whence he came, the people would put hounds on his track; and I’m not sure that I wouldn’t join in the chase. Wouldn’t you?”

“Couldn’t say; ’pend on circum’ses.”

“Ah, gentlemen,” said Mr. Leverett, “lie as most probably it was, the card, if he had known how to play it, was a good one. I’ve known more than one man to win with it when it was the only one that he held. You know that mankind must learn to hate those whom they persuade themselves that they have been commissioned by Heaven to destroy. After severe wars people concern themselves less about homicides than theft and cheatings in



general. I can remember when the killing of a man was sometimes punished by fine and imprisonment, while for the stealing of a horse the thief was sure to be hanged."

## IX

ONE morning near the end of summer, Miss Lynch, accompanied by a small girl of seven or eight years, came into town and stopped for a comforting chat with Mrs. Backus. When they were seated, she said to the child:

"You run out, Em'line, honey, and play in the yard while Aunty and Missis Backus have a little talky-talky. We'll soon be through, and then I and you will go to Mr. Luckett's store and git the things we come for."

Her face showed the traces of grief, and tears came several times during the conversation.

"I didn't want her to hear me talking about Patsy, because, Missis Backus, she mightn't think I loved *her* like I promised when Sis Marthy said I might have her if I could persuade her to come to me. But oh, Missis

Backus ! hav'n't you heard me say that I never have knew about women, what they'll do and what they won't? I never dreamed to love that girl like I did, and when I see how she grieved and went on about that man, so that she got sick and had to be put to bed, and for three weeks it look like, all me and Pap and the very doctor could do, she'd die right there—but final, at last, she revived, and her appetite come back, and she got up. And then I bought her, out of the money we got for her, I bought her a likely young neeger-woman, and that seem to peert'n her up smart. And then—the good Lord bless my poor soul!—it weren't more than four months before I noticed that she were not displeaged when Ace Usry one Sunday, that he never had even noticed her in all his lifetime before, that he had to buck up and ride along home with her from Long Creek meetin'. And after we got home and I told her, and that in solom word, that it were for nothin' *under* the sun, but because he have found out she own a neeger-woman, she never said yea nor nay, nor never opened her

mouth; and so the very next day here rid up Ace again, and asked for her, and without coming to me for my advice, she put on the very best frock she had, and she went out to meet him. I declare I went off to myself, I did, and I thes cried and *cried*. And when Ace was gone, and she come and see me acryin', she cried too, and she said if I felt that way about it she'd never see Ace Usry another time, nor no other young man would she let even *name* the getting of married to her again. Now you see how it was; the 'sponsibility all flung on me again. And I tried to ask myself what her mother, that I'd not a doubt that she was *in* Heaven, I wanted to ask what *she'd* want done. And it seem like the answer come, 'Em'line, you've done your duty. Let her go along with Ace Usry. It's all for the best.' And I done it; and when Missis Usry come to ask what I knew about Patsy's character along with that man Davison, because you know Ace ain't but nineteen years old, and a good conditioned boy he is; but when she asked me that, I told her it were hard to say exact what Patsy Ham-

mick were. She wasn't what people natchly might call a girl, in all the senses people includes of such a word; nor she wasn't a married woman, neither according to the word of the Gospul nor the law of the land; all so be as much as twice she had tried to be and once thought she were. I told Missis Usry, that nigh as I could come at it, Patsy were more like a widder than anything else; for if him she *thought* she were married to wasn't dead, 'twasn't because he oughtn't to be, and to *her* he were dead for good; and then I told her that as for her a meaning or a wanting to do wrong or act unlawful, she were as innocent of such as that as me or her, or anybody on the face of the good Lord's yearth. And that satisfied her and the family; and after that, when I see how things were agoing, I told 'em if it was to be, I wanted it over and be done with it. And I helped the poor child; for she's nothing but a child, and never will be; but I helped her to get her wedding clothes, and let them have a nice wedding; and the poor girl flung her arms around me and cried

like a baby when they went away. And after they got off, oh, Missis Backus! I thought I felt like my heart was *broke!*”

After brief indulgence of her tears, she resumed:

“ But I’m thankful I’m agetting to have some comfort out of little Em’line, you see yonder under that chainey tree, that Marthy let me have her, and I must wash my face and try to peert’n up before I call her. You know how jealous-minded girl-children are. Well, it’s done me good to tell you about it all. *But*, Missis Backus, the final conclusion of my mind about women is, that there isn’t anybody, nor there ain’t *nobody* can tell what they will do, nor what they won’t when they have their feelings in the case; nor, as I know by my own experience, they can’t tell their very own selves. *But again*, I want to say one thing about them that’s as certain as death and taxes, as the sayin’ is, and that’s that they’ve got to have somebody, if they’ve got no husband, and no children, they’ve actual positive *got* to have *somebody* to scatter their affection on of some

sort; and the onlest way I can think of to explain it all, it's thes because the good Lord made 'em so."

She retired into the house, and after freshening herself as well as she could, came out. Calling cheerily to the child, she said:

"Come, Em'line; come, darling. Aunty's through with her talk. Come in and tell Missis Backus thanky and good-by. Then we'll go on to the store where Aunty's going to get some mighty nice things for her little precious."

## SOMETHING IN A NAME

“ I do beseech you  
(Chiefly that I may set it in my prayers),  
What is your name?”—*The Tempest*

### I

“ I OFTEN say to myself, ‘Phyllis Phips, if nobody else pities you for the name you’ve got, I know I do.’ As for the *Phips* part, I come by that according to natur’, o’ course; but then my father, he had to stick on *Phyllis*, after a old aunt, not thinking how quare and a’most ridic’lous it sounded. ’Twasn’t for my name I would move to town, like severial nice quality ladies has advised. Ah, well! people ought to try to get riconciled to what they can’t help; and I don’t know but what I *will* go there after awhile, anyhow.”

Born in humble condition a few miles outside of the town of Athens in the State of Georgia, left an orphan when ten years old, given a

home in the family of one of the neighbors, her aptness and industry at all kinds of domestic work soon began to overpay the expense of keeping her and even of giving to her a little schooling. When she became of age, from the extra work she had done she had saved from the proceeds a few hundreds. By this time she had grown uncommonly expert in the making of female wear of every description, from slippers up to hats and bonnets. Her fame at length extended into town, whence orders were carried to her or she was besought to come in for greater convenience in executing them. Often she had been told that if she would remove there, take a shop of her own and keep for sale materials used in her work, she might get a considerably larger income. She hesitated long before acting upon the suggestion.

“ It’s not only that I feel easier out here, but it’s that in town I thes get tired out a constant being called *Miss Phips*. I can’t even set at the table, but it’s ‘*Miss Phips*, will you?’ and ‘*Miss Phips*, won’t you?’ And sometimes their very neegers torments me by getting of



it wrong, and a body can plain see that if they didn't daresn't, they'd giggle; because them quality people is good and polite to me the same if I was the governor's daughter, and them house - girls know they don't daresn't. Yit somehow out here—don't you know—when anybody wants me, they thes say '*Phyllis*,' and is done with it. But I'm adependng on the good Lord to direct me. Maybe it'll seemeth to him best after awhile for me to make the move."

At length, with modest fear, she decided to try the change. Her visible property at this period was a negro girl, named Puss, now about fourteen years old, whom, like herself, left an orphan when a child, she had bought for a small price from a master who was glad to let her go into such keeping. Her invisible was promissory notes for perhaps a thousand dollars, which she easily called in. There was no work about the house that Puss had not learned well under the careful training of her mistress, by whom she was greatly prized both as a handmaid and a trusted companion and

confidante. Within the last year the judgment of Puss was decided for the affirmative.

“Beca’se, you see, Miss Phyllis, in town, young ’oman like you what’s han’some and got prop’ty, en makin’ mo’, dee ken ketch a beau dat’ll be wuff havin’, name en all.”

“You hussy! I expect you’re counting on catching one for yourself.”

“Dat I ain’; I ain’ old enough, en when I is, no nigger needn’t be comin’ roun’ me, long as you single.”

“That’s a good girl.”

I don’t know the lady’s exact age at this juncture; but she would have been hurt if she had heard of anybody’s guessing it to be over thirty. Tall and slim she was, indeed, yet nobody conscientiously could have said that she was what people called *scrawny*. What she may have been thought to lack in comeliness, she much more than made up in vigor and sprightliness of movement. Of the beaux whom, for aught I know, she had in her native region, this much only is certain—not one had proved satisfactory all around.

And so the venture was made, the mistress, even in the midst of her perturbings, never failing to smile whenever Puss told her hopes that, along with other good fortune, a man would present himself with all the qualities, name included, that would justify every reasonable expectation.

They got a nice little shop on College Avenue; commodious enough, with two rooms above and two in the rear, for all their needs, and Miss Phips very soon had every reason to be pleased with the prospects. Her goods, upon which, not experienced in such things, she had laid an extremely reasonable margin, were taken so fast that new stock had to be brought almost constantly from Augusta in response to orders, not a single one of which ever so much as dreamed of going there without the cash in its pocket.

On the opposite side of the street was the leading tailoring shop, which was kept by a man named Jordan. Among his employés was one who some months before had come there from Savannah. His name was Granville Quart-

ley, and—but such a person as he was deserves, it seems to me, to begin a new chapter.

## II

SOMEWHAT below middle height, Mr. Quartley had a rather handsome face, a good figure, and dressed superbly. Even when seated on the bench with his work in his lap he and everything about him looked nice. When upon the street not a student of the college near by ever wore a sleeker hat, a jauntier blue or snuff colored velvet-collared coatee, a more checkered waistcoat, more striped trousers, or shinier shoes. Under this exterior was a singleness of nature which perhaps sought thus to be hidden for the sake of a certain ambition that, although indulged during the ten years since his coming to manhood, had not yet compassed its aims. This was to rise from journeyman and become head of a shop of his own. His notion was that in an up-country town like Athens, noted for its cultured society, the chances of his ascent might be better than they were in Savannah where businesses of all kinds were entire-

ly too prone, he thought, to keep themselves within old channels. He candidly made known to his employer, on beginning a temporary engagement, his trust that before very long his doing merely hired work would be a thing of the past.

“All right,” said Mr. Jordan, a very kind-hearted person; “if it’s in you to go up, you’ll go up.”

His work gave entire satisfaction. The boss did not scold even his extravagant dressing; for of course it wasn’t his business to be fault-finding about how many and how fine clothes people wore when their bills were settled promptly. Custom, especially from the students, soon began to improve. These often consulted the Savannah man’s tastes to the degree that kindled yet hotter his ambition.

“Quartley,” one day said Nick Wilder, of the junior class, “I wonder a fellow like you, handsome, tasty, stylish, and all that, don’t keep a shop of your own.”

This was late on a Saturday afternoon, when they were about to cross each other at the

gate of the college campus, the young man being on one of his tentative meditating parades.

“My idea exactly, Mr. Wilder, and has been for a long time; but capital, sir, that’s what has kept in my way—capital.”

“Capital? The want of it, you mean, I suppose.”

“Of course; you understand.”

“I do, now. Haven’t you laid up anything?”

“Not to that extent, Mr. Wilder. I make money free; but I spend it free for—of course for the sake of necessary appearances. But I’m going to try to be more equinomical.”

“Equinomical! Yes; I suppose that’s a good thing in its place. I never—but see here, Quartley, if I was in *your* place, with *your* looks, and *your* manners, and *your* gaits when promenading on the street, and could fix up myself like you can, I’d just go and *marry* some capital, and I’d do it quick while my blood was on me, blamed if I wouldn’t. Why don’t you just step across the street some time and take a net along with you, and haul

in Miss Phips? Do you know that that woman has money already, and is making perfect mints of it all the time?"

"Don't talk so loud, please, Mr. Wilder," he answered, looking furtively toward the milliner's, a few rods distant. "You think it would go?"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised. Why, on general principles, man, a woman with the name of *Miss Phips* ought to be willing to swap it for the aristocratic one of *Mrs. Granville Quartley*, and give boot. No sir, I wouldn't be surprised, and *I* should push a case like that to the very wall. Do you know her?"

"Yes—not quite so loud, please. I am slight acquainted there."

Wilder, getting down to the ear of his listener, in a whisper that gasped for loud, passionate expression, said, "Then my advice is to *push* it!"

They parted. Wilder on reaching his room, said to his chum:

"Bolling, I gave just now, on the spur of

the moment, some good advice to little Quartley—that was, to marry Miss Phips if he could get her.”

“Capital idea! They’d suit first rate. She don’t need very much of a man for a husband, and his *name* would make him the greatest plenty for her.”

That night Mr. Quartley, gotten up in his very best, made a pointedly formal call across the street, and was received so kindly that he talked with much freedom of the Granvilles and the Quartleys of England, and perhaps of other countries and large islands, from all of whom, according to an aged aunt of the family who could go back nobody knew how far, there was not a doubt that they were descended. Then he spoke, but with becoming indefiniteness, of his hope, after overcoming some few difficulties, of being able to place himself in a position where all the old ones of the names had been and where all the new ones ought to be. Miss Phips’s responses were as sympathetic as a delicate female can feel herself at liberty to make in such circumstances;



and when he rose to go and said that he had spent a delightful evening, she said she was glad of it; and when he said that he was coming again very shortly, she said she would be glad to see him.

After he had gone, Puss came in from the keyhole in the next room, where she had been peeping and listening.

“I’m de proudest nigger in dis whole town, I is.”

“What for, you hussy, that’s been evedropping all the time Mr. Quartley was here?”

“Beca’se he’s the very man fer you, and he git closter and closter to you ev’y time he come.”

“Pshaw! I don’t suppose he cares anything or much about me; and, besides, even if he did, I don’t—no—I don’t know what sort of man he’d make to have about the house, and—don’t you think he’s too short for me, Puss?”

“No’m, dat I don’t. He des o’ de right lenk; beca’se you gwine be de *man* o’ de house yourseff, no marter who ’tis; en him bein’ small’ll make it easier fer you. To my opinion Mr.

Gramle Quartle—er whut's his name—is de very pootist man in dis town; en Miss Lucky's 'oman, whut wash fer him, say he de nicest in his underclo's of enybody she wash fer."

"Of course, such as that ought to go a good ways with a lady that can be neat herself, and could wish to always have neat people and neat things about her. I acknowledge that his name is perfec' beautiful to the sound of it, and, if ruther small, he's han'some, and have the look to be polite and obleeging, that no woman in my business would wish to be bothered in the managing of it to suit herself. Oh—ho, me!"

"Yes'm; glad to see you so contented in your mind."

"But, Puss," she said, with intense earnestness, "I would see my coffin and have the screws screwed in the very lid, and bear all its confwinements before I'd take one single step in this awful and interesting piecè of business until I'm asked straight up and down."

"No'm, dat I wouldn't; but no need o' dat. When you en him wus in here talkin', Miss

Lucky's 'oman drapped in to fetch dem laces whar you wouldn' let me do up, en you sent 'em to her; en she say dat man told her you was de scrimshest young 'oman in dis whole town, en he ax her opinion ef she think you'd marry; en she told him she didn' know for cert'n; but she thought you'd take de leap in de dark, right man come around. En den de 'oman ax me whut *I* thought; en I answered her, I b'lieved you would, ef you got suited; but I told her no man needn't come at you widout he have a pooty name; and den I add dat I has heer'n you say dat man had de pootest in de sound you ever heerd. En dat's all I said."

"You hussy! But you're a smart, good girl. Go on to bed. I know you're sleepy."

"Yes'm; en I'm thankful to de good Lord dat I is contented in my mind 'bout my mist'ess."

### III

NICK WILDER was delighted with the results of his encouraging counselings. He was made

a confidant and was fond of talking about the brief courtship, the incipient modest retreating of Miss Phips before the begun onset, the lover's pushing pursuit, her avowed reluctance subdued by assurances of him and Puss, the final yielding to resistless assaults from without and from within that little home. Yet it must not be believed that, before the final yes was said, prudent inquiries were not put to Mr. Jordan, and, honest man that he was, received plain answers. As far as he knew, Mr. Quartley was a person of good character and habits, and, although subject to brief seasons of loss of temper and spirits, extremely amiable and, as Mr. Jordan believed, very affectionate. He could not say that he thought Mr. Quartley, although the very neatest of all his employés with his needle, was competent to run a shop of his own, because he could not cut and fit, and besides he knew not enough about the keeping of accounts and the general management of the business.

“But,” he said, in conclusion, “I tell you again, Miss Phips, that he's a amiable and a

affectionate man, and I has no doubt but what marrying will improve him, specially to a woman like you who, he will speedy find out, wants no extravagance and not too fancy doings about you. What Mr. Quartley want is to have a manager, and under which my believe is that he could be brought to the scale of a good reason'ble husband *to* such. On my mind there ain't a doubt that when he have learnt your business in all its ways, and its *a*-partments and its *de*-partments, so to speak, you couldn't find a handier man, nor woman, to 'tend to it under your direction. But for that, he'll kick against it at the offstart, and he'll have to be broke in, and nobody can do that better than you can. And the way is just simple enough. When he's told to do it, and flares up about it, it's to let him have rope to splurge hisself till he gets over it. It won't last long. He may make threats about doing something desp'rate to hisself; but there's never anything in that, as I found out by exper'ence. Yes, madam, as for a husband, and to attend to things under a sensible woman like you, my

opinion is, that as soon as it can be put out of his head that he's to run a big concern of his own, after some little cavorting, you to keep perfect cool, and making out like you ain't anotinging him, nor bothering yourself about him, he'll quiet down and be as affectionate and as handy as any woman in your business would want or desire to have a man about the house."

After these candid words, which Miss Phips construed to be more for than against the step, she felt secure in giving indulgence to her affection, to romance, and to pride. Many a bridal has been in that pretty little town among the hills; but I doubt if at ever a one of them the feelings of the bride were more innocently exultant than when this good mantuamaker to her few guests showed her visiting cards, coming all the way from Savannah, and inscribed

MRS. GRANVILLE QUARTLEY,  
9 COLLEGE AVENUE,  
Athens, Ga.

#### IV

MRS. QUARTLEY, after having her new sign-board put over the door, decided (the first hol-

idays she ever had), with her little man, to spend a fortnight at Helicon Springs, a watering place near by. Talks about business were kept out of this half of the first moon. The bride listened to stories of many Granvilles and not a few Quartleys, with interest that, keen in the beginning, began, after a while, like other sharp things after repeated use, to lose its first edge. Occasionally he made brief but warm allusions to his hopes which, until now, capital had delayed. Her notices of these were vague. He would willingly have remained longer, but at the end of the time set, using his services in the packing of both trunks, she led him back home. He had already learned that whatever she said, whether it was yes or no, she meant it.

Puss was in ecstasy at their return, and declared that they looked as happy as two little chickens. She got for them a nice supper, and, if anything, a nicer breakfast next morning.

After this meal, Mr. Quartley was much surprised to hear that the young woman who had been standing in the shop had been dismissed, but more so at these words :

“ My dear, you can attend to the business there for the present.”

If he had been ordered to wash the dishes, clean off the table, make up the bed, and sweep the floor, he would have been not less at a loss what to answer.

“ Why, my dear, you—yes, indeed you do.”

“ No, darling, I don't; that is I don't mean to. It may come a little awkward to you at first, as you don't know the price of things; but when I ain't in the shop, I'll be in here, where you can call me when you're bothered. The girl was good enough in some respects; but she wa'n't active and persuady as I just know you're going to be, of which them that know you have spoke to me in splendidest language.”

“ But—why, my dear, this is a kind of a *female* business which—why, of course—I—I should think not.”

“ It's not so female as to hurt, Mr. Quartley; and then there's collars and neck handkerchiefs, and things for men, well as women. If I can sell to men-people, you can sell to women-peo-



ple, as many a man does, excepting of such articles, of course, that men is not expected to know that females wears them, and when *they're* wanted, they can call for me. But as you don't appear prepar'd in your mind for it, you can thes walk about to-day, or you can set in here and talk to Puss, a not interrupting of her too much in her work."

Whereupon she went into the shop, opened the windows and stood watching for the early worm.

Mr. Quartley looked alternately at Puss and the encompassing walls, and for awhile, perhaps, few parrots have felt more narrowly encaged.

"Puss," he said, at length, "think she's in downright earnest?"

"Dat she is," answered Puss, pausing not in her washing a plate. "Miss' don' want no foolishness o' no sort o' nobody. When I don' clean dese things to suit her, she take de rag out my hand and dis de way she do."

Then sousing the cloth in the dishpan, she dabbed the plate on the face in a manner per-

fectly regardless. "I know dat, en so I 'tends to my business de way she want, en when I does, she's des good to me as she can be. But Miss' never want no foolishness, she don't."

"Well," he said, after a shudder and a long breath, "when I brush my hat and clothes, I shall go down to the river. Some things a man can stand, and some he can't."

While he was making ready for the threatened journey, Puss, more or less alarmed, slipped into the shop and whispered to her mistress.

"All right, Puss, go back to your work," she answered, continuing to brush off the counter. A few moments after, as the desperate man was walking with deep solemnity to the outer door, she said: "My dear, if you go off the pavement, please roll up your breeches, because there's been a rain, you know, and the mud in the streets is perfect awful."

"Breeches!" he echoed, scornfully, as he emerged. After slowly perambulating the neighborhood for a few hours, he decided to pay a parting call to Nick Wilder.

“Why, hello, Quartley! glad to see you. I’d congratulate you if you didn’t look so grum. What’s the matter? Is your wife dead?”

“No, Mr. Wilder; but *I* shall be soon.”

“My, my! that *is* news. Marrying been too much for you, Quartley?”

“Oh, no, sir; but change of occupation—man like me can’t stand such as that, Mr. Wilder.”

“Ay, now I understand you. Going to selling ribbons, corsets, and whalebones, and such things? Well, I don’t know if I wouldn’t rather do that than have to be squatting everlastingly cross-legged on my haunches. But what you going to do about it?”

“There’s a river at the foot of this town, I’m told, and I’m on my way there.”

“Pshaw, Quartley, I took you for a man of *some* sense!”

The bell for recitation ringing just then, he said, as he was proceeding to the call: “Well, I must bid you farewell, my dear fellow. That’s the reddest and muddiest stream in the world after a rain, not excepting the turbid Tiber;

and I should think about it awhile before I plunged into it. Besides, you've married what I should call tip-top, if you only knew it. But, by-by. Let us hear if anything comes of it."

"Weren't you ashamed to talk to the poor fellow that way, Nick?" said Bolling.

"The dickence! there's not the slightest danger, and, if there was, that's the way to prevent it."

The suicide then slowly repaired to his late employer, who, being busy with looking over his books, had but few words to spare for him.

"Well, Quartley, I don't think I would; at least, not till I tried the business a while. Your wife, of course, will be shocked considerable at first; but my exper'ence is, women get over such things. She's already got up her new sign of *Mrs. Granville Quartley*, and you adrowning of yourself, you may plank down your last dollar on that, *it ain't to not come down*. And I'll just swear, Quartley, that I wouldn't like the idea, after I was dead, of people saying that, excepting of my name

to give my wife, I wer'n't of one continental red cent use to her, and so, a'cording, I drowneded myself like a blind hound puppy, or a perfect unuseless kitten. Go on and do it, if it suit you; but I wouldn't—which is the last words I've got to waste on you—I just wouldn't, without I first pulled off them fine things, and I'd splunge in that water and mud just like I come in the world, blamed if I wouldn't."

Shivering slightly, he turned away. Of his walkings over and over again to the brow of the declivity where the pavement ended and back again, the set limits of this story forbid narration. At dusk, being quite hungry, he thought he would go home and get his supper, leaving the future to take care of itself. Besides, irritated, though not violently, that neither his wife nor Puss had been inquiring about him on the streets, he felt it due to himself to let them know that he was not as far gone as perhaps they had been supposing.

"You darling dear!" said Mrs. Quartley, "I know you feel better. You show it in your very eyes; and just to think that you've

come back without a speck of mud on your breeches!"

Then she made him sit down at the table, and eat, and eat, and eat.

In brief time, contrasting himself with what he might have been if fished out of the Oconee, he rose to calmness, to cheerfulness, to gayety, to energy, and, in the space before bedtime, let himself be inducted into some of the mysteries of millinery, and expressed himself as gratified that they were not as unpleasant as he had been expecting.

The Saturday afterward, as he was taking on College Avenue a promenade kindly allowed him, and calmly revolving the absorption of his name and himself in a business new and unforeseen, meeting Wilder, the latter said:

"Why, Quartley! you look like a new man."

"Think so, Mr. Wilder?"

"Certainly. The only difficulty with you was, you were screwed up too tight. Letting you down has made you look natural as life."

“I think I'm getting so, Mr. Wilder; I hope so, I thank you.”

And he did get so, and the business prospered more and more. He became in a brief while the most active and efficient of clerks, the most manageable and uxorious of husbands. Nick used to tell that it was pleasant to note how, with the nimbleness of a gray squirrel, at a word or a sign from his wife he glided up and down on the step-ladder which she had provided for him to reach the upper shelves. The Confederate war crippled them somewhat, but they rallied and prospered again. When they told Puss that she was free, she said:

“When Miss Phyllis drive me away I'm agwine, en not befo'.”

Puss has had three husbands, never being quite sure whether or not she was ever a widow. Assuming, like her mistress, to be the man in her own family, these gentlemen, after some little participation in her society, went, one after another, away, whether to drown themselves or simply to pass what the law calls “beyond seas,” she did not closely

inquire; but to every one of those who proposed to be her fourth, she has answered:

“No, I thanky. I done tried three o’ you, en dem’s de greatest plenty for me. Marryin’ don’ seem like to me it’s my lot.”



## THE TOWNSES AND THEIR COUSINS

“I’ll make assurance doubly sure  
And take a bond of fate.”—*Macbeth*

### I

“I’D rather be dead than live the life we’re living,” said Mrs. Sally Towns one day.

“But you’d a sight rather I was dead,” answered Mr. Tom Towns, her husband.

“I would not. God knows that neither of us is prepared to die. If I was, I’d pray to Him to take me this day.”

“Why, I thought you was always ready to sail right away to Heaven, and was jest waitin’ to git rid o’ me, and carry out some of your projects.”

“Make as much fun as you please, Mr. Towns. You’re a man and I’m a woman. You’re my husband and I’m your wife. You

know you can insult me and abuse me as much as you please, as you've been doing for the last twenty years and better. There's nobody and nothing to hinder you. As for the property, and you know that at least half of it came by me, you've already given Ryal more than his part, if you were to die and a division was made betwixt him and me and Wiley. And now you say you're going to town, to-morrow, and make another will, and give to Ryal, not only all the negroes except Bob and his family, but this very house, where I was born, where I was raised, where I married you, where Wiley was born. Well, sir, the law gives you the power, and you'll take it, as you've always done with what power the law or anything else ever gave you. Do it, sir; I'll never ask you again to remember me and Wiley in your will; and he will never ask you, as you know. But even if you could forget your wife at such a time, I can't see, for the life of me I can't see, how a father can forget his son."

The old man, who was full twenty-five years her senior, looked at her searchingly.

“Don’t you think that, with Buck Sinkler to help you, and Wiley, you could manage to get along?”

She blushed deeply, and instantly answered:

“Mr. Towns, if I’d been a man like you, and had the thoughts you’ve had or pretended to have about Buck Sinkler, I’d have killed Buck Sinkler before now, or I’d have killed my wife, or I’d have killed her son that had my name, or I’d have killed myself. I’d have killed somebody, certain.”

“I ’spect you would.”

“I would, indeed. That’s the difference between people. You’ve hinted and hinted about Buck Sinkler ever since I’ve been married to you, as if I wanted you to die so that—well, God only knows what all your thoughts have been, and He knows that they’ve had no just foundation. But when a man like you wants to outrage the feelings of a woman, especially if she’s his wife, he wants no foundation. The safest piece of meanness which a man can do in this world is meanness to his wife. The law gives him not only all her property, but the

right to abuse her and slander her. As for Buck Sinkler, I don't suppose he's ever known of your thoughts about him, or if he has he's too much self-respect and respect for me to care anything about them."

"Respect for hisself, and you too, hah!"

"Yes, sir; respect for both. You don't seem to understand how a man can have respect for his own honor and that of a poor, helpless, abused woman at the same time."

"I do believe she wants me dead!" he said, bitterly.

"No, sir. You needn't believe, and as to that, you don't believe any such thing. Little as you know me, it's enough for you to be certain that I'm no murderer, in deed or in heart, and if I could be, that I wouldn't in the case of my own husband and the father of my own and only child."

"How do I know that?" and his pale wrinkled face anguished with the pangs of undisguised incertitude.

"Know what?" she asked, her fiery blue eyes piercing him to the heart. "Know

what? Oh, my God! What does this man mean!"

At that moment Wiley Towns entered the room, having just returned from the field.

"There's one of the persons," said his mother, "that we were talking about. You may as well let him hear what it was you want to say about his mother and about him."

They were two powerful men. The father, known as Long Tom Towns, was six feet three inches tall, or had been before age had bent him, black-eyed, and once black-haired, with high cheek bones, a Roman nose, even in advanced age giving signs of mighty strength of will and muscle and bone. The son, an inch shorter, was strikingly like him, except that he had his mother's complexion of eyes, hair, and flesh. In spite of his plain manners and country breeding, he had the looks and carriage of a thorough gentleman.

"What is it, mother?" he said tenderly, taking her hand, but proceeding no further in his endearment. "What's the matter with mother, father? Threatening her yet again about your will?"

The father looked with some embarrassment upon his son who, scarcely twenty years of age, fixed his eyes upon him and began calmly, sadly, to remonstrate with him.

“Father, it’s time these troubles between you and mother should stop. Why they should ever have started, goodness knows. You’ve never seemed to know mother, somehow, father.”

He had put his arm around his mother and drew her toward him. The feelings he could no longer repress now showed themselves in his looks and in his words.

“I haven’t the slightest idea that you do know one fact about her, father, and that is that she’s the best woman upon the top of the ground. For some reason God Almighty knows, I don’t, you’ve been always hard with her and slighted her, and—sometimes you’ve appeared to be suspicious. I—I don’t—my God—I don’t know whether you’ve been suspicious of her or not, nor what about. But with all the opportunities you’ve had, you’ve never found out what she was worth to you,

and that all your suspicion about her — if you've got any—ain't worth hell's room." He paused, and with his disengaged hand shaded his eyes for a few moments. Partly subduing his excitement, he looked at his father calmly:

"Father, you've already given off to Brother Ryal a considerable part of the property. All right. It was yours to do with what you pleased, and neither mother nor I ever objected to it. You've often threatened to disinherit her entirely, and me in part—that is, you've so threatened to her; never to me. Now, I'm going to say this: I'd rather you'd go on and do what you intend, provided you do so quietly, than to keep on threatening about it. If you cut her out by your will, you may as well do the same by me, for every cent you leave to me I shall consider hers, and not my own; understand that at once. Never mind, mother," he continued, drawing her yet closer, "I can not only support you, but I can make you rich. If we were thrown out of house and home Cousin Buck will let us have his Gum Hill

place free of rent until I can make enough to buy one for our own."

He felt his mother give a slight shudder at the mention of the name of Buck Sinkler. His father's face became yellow.

"Your Cousin Buck, hah!" he cried, trembling with more than one wretched thought. "Already makin' your arrangements, hah! Ryal's right, damned if he ain't! I'm goin' to Ryal, and I swear—"

It was a horrid oath. Then ordering his horse—it was late in the evening—he rode away.

"What upon earth did he mean by those words, mother?" asked Wiley in stupefied astonishment.

"Oh, Wiley, Wiley!"

She threw her arms around him and they both wept sore.

## II

FOR fifty years Long Tom Towns had been what they called a rusher. Beginning his independent career a poor orphan, he accumu-



lated property rapidly, and at the death of his first wife, leaving one child, was one of the wealthiest men in the neighborhood. His plantation joined that of Mr. John Sinkler, whose daughter and only child, Sally, was twenty years old. Buck Sinkler, her cousin, of about her age, living about a mile away, had always loved her the best in the world. But somehow Long Tom, employing his accustomed energy, prevailed, and, the second wife's parents having died shortly after the marriage, the two plantations were united.

The conversation recited in the foregoing chapter must serve for a brief history of this ill-assorted marriage. The law in Georgia then, as in most States of the Union, in imitation of the common laws of England, gave to the husband all his wife's estate that he could reduce to his possession in her lifetime, and even after her death made him administrator, without liability to render account, and therefore heir of all the estate in which, when dying, she had an interest, vested or contingent. Such rights and powers, in such a man as Tom

Towns, often led to unhappy consequences, especially where the disparity of age in the husband and wife was great, as in this case, and the husband prone to jealousy. Matters seemed now to have culminated. Broken in health at last by age, by exposure in all sorts of weather, by long yielding to stormy and evil passions, Tom Towns had gradually fallen under control of Ryal, his elder son, who now dwelt at the house where he had lived prior to his second marriage.

On the day following that on which the last interview was held with his wife and Wiley, he and Ryal went on horseback to the county seat. Their way lay for half a mile toward Dukesborough, and then diverged southeastward to the highway leading from the latter to the former village. On the same day Wiley Towns went to Dukesborough. His taking his gun along was not extraordinary, as such an action was frequent among country youth in those times, when game of several sorts was abundant.

But Wiley was not himself that day. He

came early under the influence of liquor for the first time in his life. Then he talked freely and bitterly of his father, especially of the latter's treatment of his mother.

It was late in the afternoon before he could be induced to leave. Finally old Mr. Leadbetter got him upon his horse, and he went reeling away, holding to the mane; his gun swung by a leathern strap dangling at his side.

Two shots, with a short interval between, an hour later. The sound came up from the bottom a quarter of a mile north of Little Joe Willis's. They heard them distinctly at old Mr. Jonikin's, a mile further south, where Mrs. Willis was on a visit. Mrs. Towns, already anxious about Wiley's prolonged absence, especially in his state of mind, was startled, put up her sewing and walked to the gate. Two horses came up saddled, bridled, but riderless, galloping. They were her husband's, and Ryal's. A few minutes afterward, as she was walking rapidly down the road, she met Joe driving slowly his wagon, and

Ryal leading, behind, Wiley's horse. In the wagon was the dead body of Tom Towns.

"My God!" she exclaimed, "what is this, Ryal?"

"You see for yourself," answered Ryal.

"Where's Wiley?"

"Wiley? He's down in the bottom, or 'twixt here and there."

She looked for a moment upon her husband's body with horror and then rushed on down the road.

"You see how it is, Joe," said Ryal.

"Jes' so, Ryal," said Joe.

They turned in the yard and drove to the house door. Soon Mrs. Towns came up, leading her son, whose swollen face and bloodshot eyes were piteous and terrible to see.

"I hardly think it was done o' purpose, Joe," said Ryal when they had taken out the body, carried it into the house and returned to the gate. "I can't hardly believe it was done o' purpose."

Joe Willis was much confused as well as horrified.

“I hope not, Ryal. Leastways, I should wish—in fact, I should both wish and hope—”

“You better go for Mr. Jonikins, Joe, hadn’t you?”

“I think so,” answered Joe, eagerly, and started off.

“Joe,” said Ryal, detaining him for a moment, “see here, Joe. It’s not exactly the time to be talkin’ about business; but I want to tell you that pa told me, no longer’n yisterday, that he didn’t hardly think that he treated you exactly right about the heater, and that if he lived he intended to let you have it on reasonable terms. But he told me that if he died—and, Joe, pa seemed to have a suspicion that he wasn’t going, somehow, to live long—you mind what I’m a sayin’, Joe?”

“Co’se I do, Ryal.”

“Yes, he seem to ’spicion that too many was agin him for him to live long, and so he told me that if he should die—he was very keeful to say *if*—he wanted me to let you have the heater on reasonable terms, and I made up my mind to let you have it—well, for little or

nothin', Joe. It ain't exactly the time to be talkin' about business, but yit, knowin' how you'd been worried and put to trouble about that heater, I thought I'd let you know what pa said about it, and what I done already made up my mind I'd do. You mind, Joe?"

"Yes, Ryal: thanky, thanky," said Joe, moving off. Then he muttered to himself: "Dammdest case I ever see or heerd of."

### III

THEY buried the old man behind the garden. The funeral service was short and constrained. There was agitation in the public mind, but it was silent. What sympathy was expressed was mostly for the widow, and next, strange as it seemed, for Wiley, whose heart seemed broken by remorse. Ryal was pale and tearless. He gave minute directions about the burial. When the grave was filled he took a spade from a bystander, smoothed it down from head to foot, scraped the clods carefully away, then, after looking at it for a few mo-

ments, as if it were his grave and nobody else had any interest in it, turned away.

“I can’t think,” said Ryal to Mr. Jonikin, in presence of others of the neighbors, “that is—I don’t like to think that Wiley did it o’ purpose. Wiley was drunk, you know, Mr. Jonikin, and for the onliest time—at least the onliest time I ever heerd of—in his life. He were mighty mad with pa, that’s a fact, especially about somethin’ pa said to ma yisterday. So he said when we got to him where he was alayin’ down in the road, and pa called to him. He talked rough to pa and pa talked rough to him. Wiley were mighty drunk and mighty mad. When I see him raise his gun I jumped to take it from him but I was too late. Yit Wiley, mad as he were, didn’t seem to know exactly what he was adoin’ nor what he done. To save my life I can’t believe that Wiley knowed fully what he were about, and it’s my hopes that the neighbors mayn’t think so.”

Wiley Towns was overwhelmed. Yet he protested innocence of having shot his father intentionally. He admitted to have felt very

great indignation against him for certain treatment he had inflicted upon his mother the previous day, and he therefore supposed that, under the influence of liquor, while in a quarrel on the road, he had fired. The day after the funeral he rode to town and offered himself to the sheriff, who sent him back home on his parole to appear if prosecution should be instituted. This conduct, coupled with the rumor that Tom Towns had disinherited by will his wife entirely and left almost nothing to Wiley, enhanced yet more the sympathy for them.

“Somebody ought to 'a' killed such a man,” said Mrs. Joe Willis.

“And sure enough they did, Mandy,” said Joe. “Uncle Tom weren't the friend to me that he promised ma on her death-bed to be—that is, not exactly, and he never treated me exactly right about the heater. Still I'm sorry—well, I hope now I'll git it.”

“Joe, that heater, as you call it, don't seem to be ever off your mind.”

“Well, Mandy, nobody wants to be flung into a heater if he can help it.”



“I suppose not, from the worry yours gives you.”

“It ain’t mine. That’s the mischief of it. It’s Uncle Tom’s, arunnin’ right into me.”

“All the same,” she said laughing; “but what makes you expect to get out of it now?”

“Ryal done said I could have it.”

“Good gracious, Joe! You and Ryal ought both to be ashamed of yourselves, talking about such things so soon.”

Joe was a little ashamed. Now this heater was the one great trouble on the mind of Joe Willis. What was known among planters as a “heater,” called thus, according to tradition, from the smoothing iron used by laundresses, was a triangular piece of ground protruding from one into another plantation, thereby rendering fencing of it troublesome and expensive. The being “flung into a heater” was most especially disagreeable to small farmers. Joe Willis, who was the nephew of Tom Towns’s first wife, had besought him often to take him out of the heater; but the former, who enjoyed his worrying in that regard, had al-

ways persisted in demanding a price that he was unable to pay. Yet Joe, hopeful as he was now of relief, felt somewhat ashamed by this remark of his wife, and went off to himself and ruminated.

The person most avowed in expression of sympathy for the widow and Wiley was Buck Sinkler. He was yet a bachelor, hearty in body and mind, thriving, the owner of two plantations, Gum Hill and that containing his residence two miles west of the Townses'. Ever fond of his Cousin Sally, he had visited often the house in former years, until Towns's moroseness kept him away. He and Wiley, however, were very often together, and to Wiley he was drawn the more closely because of his father's growing partiality for Ryal, who was Buck's brother-in-law, to whose intermarriage with his sister, ten years before, he had been vehemently opposed.

"Ryal," he would say of his brother-in-law, "always had the same claws as his father. I could see 'em, but he managed to keep 'em hid from Sis Nancy till she married him. He is

and always was as regular a chip of the block as were ever clipped off with a hatchet, only he's sly in his meanness, while his father weren't. Tom Towns didn't care if people knowed he was mean, so he could keep on getting property. Well, I'm sorry that Wiley killed him, but I shall always believe it was an accident. As he had to die, it's a pity he didn't before he signed that cussed will. I want to see now how Ryal's goin' to look when him and Sis Nancy move into that house arfter Cousin Sally and Wiley move out. I haven't seen Sis Nancy, for Ryal and I ain't as thick as brothers-in-law might be expected to be. But I can't believe that Sis Nancy's goin' to be satisfied to see Cousin Sally drove out o' that house where she was born, and have to begin life over again. Take the case up and down, by and large, over and under, all round, it's a cussed bad case."

## IV

THE following is a part of a dialogue had between Ryal Towns and his wife on Saturday

night, after the homicide, which occurred on Wednesday afternoon:

“ Ryal, what’s this talk about your pa’s willing all the property to you and cutting out Cousin Sally and Wiley ? ”

“ Who told you about it ? ”

“ Mandy Willis. She was over here this evening, and said Joe told her so, and she said that you had promised to let Joe have the twenty-acre heater next to him for almost nothing. ”

“ I think Mandy might find enough to do at home to keep her from here, meddlin’ with my business. ”

“ I don’t see how that is meddling, Ryal. Mandy is not a meddlesome woman, either; but is it so ? ”

“ No it ain’t. Wiley’s left Bob, his wife, and his youngest child, and ma’s left what furnitures he had when pa married her. ”

“ Is that all ? and the house and Sinkler place, that ain’t Cousin Sally’s ? ”

“ No ; it’s ours. ”

She arose and walked a time or two across the room, then paused in front of her husband,

who, during the rest of the conversation, seldom looked toward her.

“What do you mean by ‘ours,’ Ryal?”

“Why mine, Nancy, and yours.”

“You may well say ‘mine;’ but there you might have stopped; for I have no part or lot in that piece of property.”

He looked at her for a moment, and his dark face flushed.

“I never see such a woman as you, Nancy, to stand in the way of your own interest.”

“Ryal,” she said, endeavoring to be calm, “we’ve had, that is, you’ve had from your pa, what, if the property was divided between you three, would be your part, and the cause of it is not that your pa loved you so much; but, more than anything else, because Cousin Sally and Wiley both liked Brother Buck, and your pa hated him.”

“I don’t know; I can’t say that pa really hated Buck.”

“Yes you do know it, Ryal, and you never tried to keep him from hating him, although he’s your wife’s only brother.”

“You’re mistaken, Nancy. I like Buck Sinkler myself. Leastways I’ve tried to get him to like me, but he never comes anigh me, nor anigh you, as to that, exceptin’ when he knows that he won’t meet long o’ me.”

He uttered this in a piteous tone.

“And that’s because he thinks you’ve helped to prejudice your pa against Cousin Sally and Wiley.”

“It’s no sich a thing,” he said, doggedly.

“Ah, well, then let that go. But tell me now, Ryal—have you been expecting to move over yonder when Cousin Sally and Wiley gather up their few things and start wandering around for victuals and shelter?”

“Nancy, you didn’t s’pose that I were goin’ to let ma and Wiley suffer?”

“That’s neither here nor there. Are you expecting to move over there?”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I am. But I ’tend to let ’em have this place until Wiley can get one of his own, and I made up my mind not to charge one cent o’ rent.”

“Well, Ryal,” she said in a low voice,

“there’s one person that’s not going there to live, and that person’s me.”

“Name o’ God, Nancy! what do you mean?”

“You’ve called on the right name, Ryal,” she continued, trembling, but not with mortal fear. “It’s a name that ain’t been called on in these two families, as a habit; leastways, like it ought to be—the more’s the pity. If I was willing to move over there—and Cousin Sally’s work has made it the prettiest in the neighborhood—it’s because of the name of God that I’d be afraid to go. Ryal, you’re my husband; I’ve been a true wife to you; you’ve been a man that for a wife to get along with, she has to take a heap of pains, because you’re hard to please, and you’re slow to let it be known when you are pleased.”

She sat down, looked into the fire, and her eyes filled with tears. She wiped them away and proceeded :

“I don’t say that you’ve been cruel to me, but you’ve hurt my feelings, and many times when you didn’t intend to do it and didn’t know you done it. You’ve been hard on the negroes that

came by me, and you've never liked my brother. But as to that I've never been so much hurt, because there was never much love to lose betwixt you and Brother Buck. You've hurt me the worst by the way you've treated Cousin Sally and hinted to your pa about her, and prejudiced him against her. She's not only my cousin, but she's a woman, and any woman that's a true one is obliged to feel hurt when she sees another true woman put upon in ways that hurt her the worst. Such as that goes to a woman's—HEART!" She uttered the last word almost with a scream, then rose and stood before her husband, who yet kept his seat and looked upon the floor.

"And when you ask me in the name of God what I mean, I answer that that's what I mean, and that I'd no more go to live in that house, that is, in the way you've been thinking about, than I'd make my bed upon your pa's grave!"

He started for a moment, but controlled his anger. She saw it, yet felt no alarm.

"And not even," said he, "when he was kill-



ed by his own son, and the son of the woman we're talkin' about?"

"Ryal, you've told me, and you've told other people that you hardly thought that Wiley knew what he was about when he shot his father, and that you were certain he wouldn't have done such a thing if he hadn't been drunk. Mr. Jonikin says that when Wiley got to the house with Cousin Sally, he was so drunk that he wouldn't believe and could hardly be made to understand that his father was dead. But let that all go. Cousin Sally had nothing to do with that; and yet it was his suspicion of her that made him sign such a will. You knew it was, Ryal. He loved Wiley more than he did you. He told you so more than once, and before me. The very night he staid here he said he intended to leave Wiley all of Bob's family, and this place as long as Cousin Sally remained a widow, and now he's left that out. How it happened I don't know."

Ryal looked at her for a moment and seemed to be considering how to reply.

"Another thing, Ryal. When your mother

died you were a sickly child. I've heard Mr. Jonikin and Mrs. Jonikin say that Cousin Sally, though she was scarcely grown when she married your pa, yet from the very day she married him, took you, and nobody who didn't know better would have believed but that you were her own child; and she raised you and carried you through years of sickness, until you got over it, and that not even when Wiley was born did she ever make any difference with you except to make Wiley give way to you, which the boy's always done and does yet."

"My Godamighty, Nancy! What has that got to do with it?" he said with quivering voice.

"I don't know what it's got to do with you, Ryal," she answered, looking him in the face with dilated eyes; "but with me it's got this—that even if I believed that Wiley shot his father in cold blood and with a clear head—and I haven't a doubt that it was an accident, for that boy never could be a murderer, drunk or sober—yet for Sally's sake I could not go to that house to live; no more—you hear me say it again—than I could make my bed upon your pa's grave."

She left him immediately and went off to bed. Ryal sat up much later.

## V

ON that same night another conjugal chat was had in the neighborhood. Joe Willis had returned from his field, eaten his supper silently, and he and his wife sat before the fire. She had been waiting to see him settled and still; for he was naturally a restless little man, and, I suppose I ought to add, remarkably handsome, as this was the main reason why he had succeeded in getting such a wife.

“Joe, Nancy Towns says she isn’t going to move over to your Aunt Sally’s, and she says that if she was in your place, she wouldn’t go to fencing in that heater, at least yet awhile.” She had other things to say to her husband; but she determined to withhold them for the present. Ryal had been over there that morning, and said that he might move his fence at once, and pay his own price, and at his own time, and Joe was ruminating.

“Nancy,” he answered, with his usual courageous start in discussing with his wife questions on which they were not in entire accord, “Nancy may ’tend to her own business, Mandy, and I’ll try to ’tend to mine.”

“The reason she gives, Joe, is that she thinks the property belongs, or ought to belong, and if justice is done will belong, as much to your Aunt Sally and Wiley as to Ryal.”

“Nancy don’t know anything about it, Mandy,” said he petulantly. “Women don’t understand about land, nor the titles to land. Now, Mandy, the titles to all the land up to last Wednesday evenin’, them titles lay in Uncle Tom, the heater and all, and which, as to that, he’d ’a’ never took me out where he flung me. But you see now, Mandy, Uncle Tom he’s dead, and the title’s outen him and settled in Ryal, accordin’ to the will he left. And, therefore, Mandy, them titles—”

“Look at me, Joe. Turn around, and look at me,” for Joe sat with his back not exactly opposed to, but quartering to her, and looked up at the ceiling wisely and intently as he de-

livered himself of these legal dicta. "Turn right around and look at me—there. Nancy says that your Uncle Tom, from what Ryal tells her, did not give to Wiley the property that he said he was going to give him the very night before he made his will."

"Lor' me, Mandy, can't a man change his mind, and especially about the makin' of wills and passin' the titles to landed property? A man may talk, and talk, and talk, both before and after, as to that matter, he'd signed the papers; but it's not his talk neither before nor after, that passes the titles, but it's the papers, and which Nancy, and in fact wimming in general—"

"As for changing a man's mind, Joe, of course he can do that. I've known you even to do that when you found you was wrong—"

"Oh, thunder!" and Joe resumed his former position.

"—As you're certain to do now."

He turned square around again.

"What about that heater that's made me keep up two strings o' fence for the last ten

years when I oughtn't to've kep' up but one, and hit a short one? I tell you, Mandy—"

She rose, lifted her chair, and set it down close by her husband.

"Joe, there's something mighty bad about all this business."

"Good gracious me alive, Mandy! It is a bad piece o' busines; but is it any o' mine? Did I have anything to do with the makin' o' Uncle Tom's will or the—or the—shootin' of him?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking me any such a question."

"Well, you look like—ah, you look like—you 'spicioned."

"Well, Joe, if I look that way I deceive my looks, as the saying is. Of course, we all know how your Uncle Tom was killed, but everybody believes it was an accident; but that's got nothing to do with the other business."

"Of co'se it ain't. If it had—" Joe got up, and walked the floor.

"You see, Mandy," said he, returning to calm discussion of legal principles, "when I once gits the heater into my possession, my

peaceable possession, you mind, Mandy, so far as Ryal's concerned the titles to the property, and landed property, Mandy, 's a thing that women, as a general thing—not that I don't think a heap of Nancy, and suppose you know, leastways you ought to know, my opinion of you."

Joe rubbed his curly head passionately as he walked up and down.

"Joe," said his wife, turning and following him with her eyes as he walked, "you've never taken my advice and been sorry for it."

"Mandy," said Joe, pausing, looking at his wife, and speaking almost in a whisper, "I'm afraid not to go on to fencing that heater arfter Ryal told me to. Ryal Towns is my cousin; but he's—Ryal's a curious fellow."

She rose up instantly.

"Joe, let me ask you a question. Aren't you a man?"

"What did you say, Mandy?"

"I'll try to speak distinct, so that there mayn't be a mistake. I asked Mister Josiah Willis if he wasn't a man."

“If I ain’t—if I ain’t mistaken ’bout my own sect, I—I am. Leastways, I’ll go so far as to give it as my opinion, that I think I am.”

“Well, then, I’d be a man, and I’d keep on being a man. You are one man and Ryal Towns another, and I can’t see how one man, if he is a man, can be afraid of another man, who is nothing more than a man. And yet there stands my husband, whom I love better than my own life, who acknowledges—”

She put her hand to her eyes, turned from him, and sobbed.

“Oh, Joe, Joe!” she proceeded, yet weeping; “you are as honest-hearted a man as ever lived, in spite of the wretched examples you’ve had in your Uncle Tom and Ryal. Thank God, you’ve never loved ’em much. But I didn’t think you was afraid of ’em, and until this very week you haven’t been; and I want to know what it’s about, and I’m going to find out before I go to bed.” Then clearing her face she continued, “But before I do that, I’ll give you a message that was left here for you this evening by Buck Sinkler.”



“Who from?”

“William Mobley.”

Joe started. “What upon earth can William Mobley want with me?”

“That I can’t tell; but he told Buck to tell you that he wanted to see you on urgent business a Monday morning, unless you could go to town to-morrow. The will’s agoin’ to be brought into court a Monday, and he wants to see you beforehand. He was going to send the sheriff with a paper of some sort to you; but Buck said it wasn’t worth while, because he’d tell you. And he said also to Buck that from what he had heard about the will he believed he could break it.”

Joe walked rapidly across the room several times without saying a word.

She watched him as he walked. On one side of the fireplace was a cradle in which lay asleep another little Joe, a year old. She rose, went to the cradle, pulled the covering from the child’s face and said:

“Come here, Joe.”

He came.

“Look down there. There lies Joe Willis the second, beautiful like his father, and loved by me next to his father. But do you know, Joe, that I'd rather he would die to-night, there in his cradle, than to grow up to a man and be afraid to do right for fear of another man?”

Joe pulled at his hair as if he hated it. She took a chair, and drew another close beside it; then said:

“Come here, Joe; sit down by me, and let us talk, heart to heart, as we promised to do, with each other.”

Joe took the chair. They sat long together and their talk was the beginning of a conjugal career happier than it had ever been before.

## VI

RYAL TOWNS was deeply pained by the knowledge of the sympathy there was in the neighborhood for his stepmother and brother, and the universal sentiment that the homicide was wholly accidental. Late on Sunday afternoon he rode over to Joe Willis's. Finding that Joe was gone to town he was greatly sur-

prised, and asked of his wife the reason. She answered that William Mobley had sent a message to him that he wished to see him, but about what she could not say. Mr. Sinkler who brought it didn't know. He mused awhile, then without alighting from his horse, turned and rode back.

The court having jurisdiction of the estates of minors and deceased persons, with that of general public county business, consisted of five justices, resident citizens. The greater part of Monday had been consumed in the matters of roads and bridges, and it was mid-way in the afternoon before the consideration of the ordinary business came on. When it did, Mr. Elam Sandige, as counsel for Ryal Towns, propounded the last will and testament of Thomas Towns in common form; that is, without formal notice to all parties presumed to be interested, a procedure which made it unnecessary to seriously contest at this juncture. William Mobley, a young lawyer, and a relative of the Sinklers, had been retained by Buck to watch the case and obtain whatever

was possible for Mrs. Towns and Wiley. This he was endeavoring to do, and, as a start in working the case had sent the message to Joe Willis, with whom, on Monday morning, he had a long conference.

When the case was opened he asked of Mr. Sandige permission to inspect the paper propounded, read it carefully and then rose and said:

“May it please your honors, the paper propounded seems to have been executed in conformity to all legal requirements. In the codicil of the will, however, but for reasons which it is not now necessary to explain, I might contend, on the part of those whom I represent, there are conditions which tend to show that the testator’s mind was not fully determined when the will was signed. But I propose to put the case of my clients upon other grounds.”

Then taking his hat, he withdrew from the court house and went to his office.

“It’s no use talking, Buck,” he said an hour afterward, as, with the latter and the sheriff, Triplett, standing in the vestibule of his office, he looked at Ryal while, with his letters testa-

mentary in his hand, he was making for his horse standing at the rack on the public square; "I don't blame you for wanting it stopped, but you can't stop such things, Buck; God Almighty won't let them stop. I suspected how it was from the first."

Ryal unhitched his horse and had his foot in the stirrup ready to mount, when Triplett's hand was laid upon his shoulder. He shrank as if it were a heavy bar of heated iron.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Towns," said Triplett, "but I've a paper for you." He held it up before his face so he could see the superscription.

"My God!" exclaimed Ryal, and leaned against the rack. "Who says so, Triplett? Who started this?" Further utterance was choked in his throat. He requested to be allowed to go to Mr. Sandige's office. The sheriff conducted him thither and waited at the door until he emerged. Then, as it was too late to procure bail, even if allowable, Triplett, by consent of Mobley, rather than imprison him in jail, took him to his own house for the

night. Buck Sinkler had already sent a messenger to Wiley requesting him to notify Ryal's wife that he would be arrested on a criminal charge, without saying what. It was late at night when Wiley reached town with his sister-in-law, as their residence was sixteen miles distant. Old Triplett could never speak of the meeting of husband and wife without tears. Ryal assured her of his innocence, and she thoroughly believed it. Neither Ryal nor his wife slept that night. She lay by his side, and they conversed the livelong night. Stung to the heart by not finding her brother there (he had returned home by another way), she clung closer to her husband, and when the morning came felt that never, since the day of her marriage, had she loved him so entirely.

Early in the day the justices before whom the trial for commitment was to be had met in the court room. Ryal, pale as the dead, looked hard at Joe Willis, who was sitting by William Mobley. He had sought Joe several times on the day before; but as no one could tell him where he was, he supposed he had returned

home. Joe looked about him and seemed to see everybody in the room except Ryal. The counsel opening the case said he had but one witness to offer, but perhaps would follow his testimony with some circumstances tending, if necessary, to corroborate it. Then he asked Joe Willis to take the stand. Mrs. Towns regarded Joe and her husband alternately. Ryal looked at Joe for a few moments then at his wife for a few more, most yearningly. It was the last time that he ever saw that face.

Joe Willis himself was a little pale when he began. He employed many words in relating how he had been on a walk to the heater, counting the rails that he would save by taking it into his own possession, if such a fortune should ever befall him, and then how, upon the return home, he was astonished to find Wiley Towns lying by the side of the road asleep and intoxicated, while his horse was browsing near by. There Joe paused.

“What did you do when you saw Wiley Towns?” asked Mr. Mobley.

“Nothin’,” answered Joe. “Narything did I do.”

“Why not?”

“Because I heard voices.” Ryal groaned from the great deep of his breast.

“I heard voices,” continued Joe, “and I didn’t want Uncle Tom to think that I had anything to do with the making of Wiley drunk; and so I got out o’ the road and dodged behind the big poplar.”

“Joe,” said Ryal, haggard and beseeching, “how can you stand there and talk that way when you know you was at home when I got there, and you asked me who that was shootin’ down in the bottom?”

“Yes, Ryal,” answered Joe, without looking at him, “but I’m on my oath now, and at that time things was too hot, and too much devil was in you for me to let you know where I thes been and what I saw.”

Ryal shifted his chair so that he could rest his elbow on a table near by and lean his head upon his hand. Lifting his gaze above Joe it seemed fixed upon the ceiling. His wife followed him with her eyes, which were fastened upon him while Joe proceeded with



his testimony. This was to the effect following :

The old man's fondness for Wiley seemed to have been returning as he drew near home. When first heard by Joe he was railing at Ryal for wanting all the property, and especially for having left the will in town contrary to his express injunctions. They had reached the little stream of water that crossed the road, and their horses were drinking.

"I mean to go right back to town and burn up that cussed will. It ain't the way I want it. The old man—"

Just as the old man said these words Wiley's horse appeared walking towards those ridden by the others, and Wiley was observed prostrate in the road. His father gave an exclamation and called to him. Ryal said to his father that one of the neighbors whom they met on the return had told him that Wiley had been in Dukesborough all day, and been drinking very hard. Both dismounted and approached Wiley. Ryal reached him first. Lifting the gun as far as the belt yet around Wiley would

allow, then getting upon his knees, and taking deliberate aim, he shot his father. The latter was so close that every shot went through his body. The report momentarily aroused Wiley, and in some sort of a struggle between the two brothers the gun was fired again after the father had fallen. Joe would never forget, he said, "the words of the old man when, seeing Ryal pointing the gun, he threw up his hands and cried: 'Oh, Wiley! Wiley! He's going to kill me! forgive me, Wiley! Oh, my God, forgive me!'"

Then Joe told how Ryal had charged Wiley with the killing, and how himself, after crawling upon his hands and knees for a few rods, had risen and run to his own house, where he had barely recovered his breath when Ryal came up.

During the recital Ryal Towns's face grew more and more livid. His head subsided until it now lay upon his arm on the table. His wife then moved her chair beside his and, taking his hands, she shuddered.

"Ryal," she said, "this is death! Oh, you

judges and you people, leave him with me for a little while, won't you? won't you?"

"Clear the court room, Mr. Sheriff," said one of the justices who, with his colleague and the rest, went out, or backed to the door.

She put her arm around her husband, and drew his head to her bosom.

"There, now, that's the only place." Looking into his eyes, yet directed on high, she said:

"Ryal, do you know that the hand of God is upon you? Oh, my husband, do you know that you are dying?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Oh, my husband! my husband!"

She took from her shoulders the shawl where-with she was wrapped, folded it, rose from her chair, placed the shawl in it, and tenderly laid his head upon it; then knelt by his side.

"Ryal, my husband, don't go into the presence of God without repentance and confession. Oh, my Ryal, pray God to forgive you! Pray, Ryal! pray, my husband! Pray! Oh, my God! don't take his life till he prays!"

And then she uttered a scream so loud, so

piercing, so agonizing that none who heard it ceased during life to remember it.

“Pray for me, Nancy,” he said in a whisper. She lifted her eyes toward Heaven, and in her husband’s name implored pardon, especially for this last great crime.

The words were few but full of passion, and they were not ended when he died.

A year after this event Buck Sinkler and his sister, who now lived with him, were sitting by the fireside in the evening. Buck had just returned from a visit to Mrs. Towns, and was in low spirits. His sister said to him :

“Brother Buck, I knew it would be useless. Even if Cousin Sally should think of marrying again, and I know she doesn’t any more than I do, she wouldn’t think it would be right to marry you, remembering how her husband felt about you.”

“Yes,” answered Buck, “that’s what she told me. She’s a great woman, Sally is. She’s truer to Tom Towns in his grave than the poor creature was to her when living. Be it so. I give it up.”

THE END





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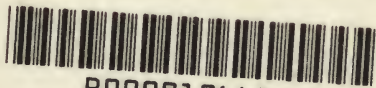


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